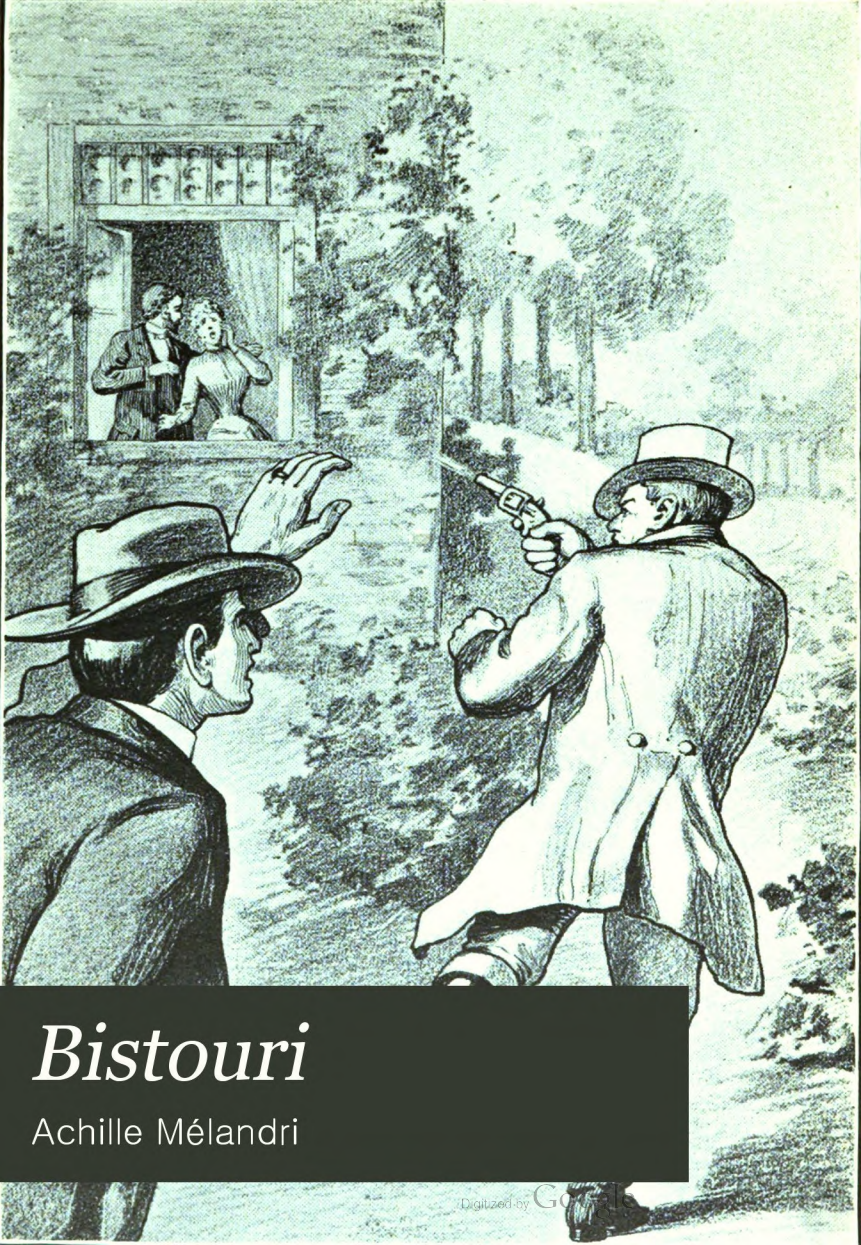

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Bistouri

Achille Mélandri

1. Fiction, French

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Melzardri



“ THAT IS FOR YOU, CONFOUNDED FRENCHMAN! ’ ”

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BISTOURI.

BY
A. MELANDRI.

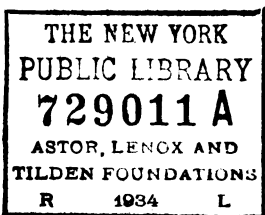
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BISTOURI.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE FOG.

ALBERT DORIAN'S first visit to London, during which occurred an almost incredibly strange event which decided his destiny, took place on the 23d of December, 1875.

Albert was eighteen years old. The only son of a rich merchant in the Rue St. Honoré, he had left college in order to pursue his artistic vocation, and was studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, in the studio of Gérôme.

Up to this period life had shown him only a smiling face. His figure was good and his health robust. His fortune was assured, his days were well occupied by tasks and studies which developed his love for the beautiful, and already procured him those heartfelt satisfactions which are the reward of those

whose time is devoted to the service of the ideal.

What decided him to accept the invitation of a family living in the English capital, whose head, a friend of his father, had more than once asked him to spend Christmas week with them, was his desire to visit the National Gallery, which contains so many masterpieces. Two days before Christmas, therefore, the young Parisian, received with the most perfect cordiality by his kindly hosts, alighted at No. 97, Albany Street, near the Regent's Park, where Mr. Churriel had placed at his disposal a roomy and convenient guest chamber.

The first thing that Albert Dorian wished to see after the Holbeins, Velasquezes, Reynoldses and Lawrences of the picture gallery, was a genuine London fog. The national pride of our neighbors across the Channel is somewhat disturbed by French pleasantries on this subject.

It is certain, that, in general, the climate of Great Britain resembles that of Normandy. Summer and autumn are exquisite over there. Nowhere else can one find more luxuriant verdure, more marvellous parterres of flowers

than in the parks of that country. On certain winter days, however, when, not to belie the universal verdict, and, doubtless, to sustain its reputation, the Thames concludes to envelop London in a humid vapor, the foreigner beholds a sight too singular ever to be forgotten. The Christmas of the year 1875 was made notable by one of these phenomena. The sun at rising was like a disk of red-hot iron. The pavements, covered with hard snow, emitted no sound under the trampling of the horses. Towards noon, an immense cloud, whose progress was as slow and threatening as that of an invading army, suddenly advanced upon the city, swallowing up its quarters one by one. A grisly chaos drowned in turn the roofs, the spires, the domes of the greatest metropolis of the world, and London seemed effaced from the surface of the earth.

From the balcony of Churril house, where he had stationed himself in spite of the cold, Albert watched the approach of the terrible column of vapor and saw the houses, the inhabitants, the pavement of Albany Street disappear within it. A deathlike silence marked its passage. The cabs, arrested by

the darkness, remained motionless through fear of accidents. The gas jets were lighted everywhere, but even their blood-colored flame did not reach beyond a yard or two. At every street corner policemen were stationed with torches, who shouted information to such unfortunate people as had been taken by surprise at a distance from their homes, and were trying to grope their way back.

Much amused by the originality, the unexpectedness of the spectacle, Albert discovered that even he was enveloped in what looked like flakes of grayish wool which hid from him not merely the walls of the nearest houses, but the balcony on which he was leaning. It was necessary for Mr. Churrit to scold him for his imprudence before he would return to the dining-room. There, although it was hardly noon, the lighted cressets and chandeliers were surrounded by a halo like that one sees around the moon on damp nights. The great fire burning on the hearth was not sufficient to dry the atmosphere of the apartment. Tablecloth, napkins, curtains, all were moist. Although the doors and windows were carefully closed, the wretched vapor insinuated itself everywhere.

The repast was none the less joyous on that account. Due honor was paid to the traditional turkey stuffed with truffles; the pudding, crowned with holly, and swimming in blazing punch, was applauded. Then came the games, the dances under the mistletoe hanging from the chandelier, which lasted until supper time. Soon after the nurse came to take the children up to bed. Mr. and Mrs. Churrit, sitting around the fire with their young guest, chatted a while, and finally, after mutual good wishes, each regained his chamber.

As soon as he found himself alone, Albert quickly drew aside his curtains and looked outdoors. Those who have passed through the clouds in a balloon may form some notion of the sensation he experienced in beholding that impenetrable veil underneath which gigantic serpents seemed to be crawling, entwining, writhing, according as the layers of moving fog became lighter and more transparent.

Whether it was a natural inclination to adventures, or whether the rarity of the spectacle urged him to imprudent action, he was at all events conscious of an irresistible de-

sire to mingle like a phantom with these moving shadows, and experience the hitherto unknown charm of being invisible in the open street, if only for a few minutes, that he might be able to tell his Paris friends about it afterwards.

There was no difficulty in doing so. Albert had a pass-key in his pocket and could leave the house without disturbing the domestics. He wrapped himself in a large cloak, noiselessly descended the two staircases which separated him from the ground-floor, unfastened the chain which secured the front door, and, after blowing out his candle and placing it on the first step of the stairway along with some matches, he went out, closing the door quietly behind him.

There he was outside, his feet in the snow . . . he could neither hear his own steps nor scarcely see his own body, a singular situation which made him smile. He turned to the right, keeping one hand on those iron railings with which all English houses are protected; like a blind man he counted the intervals which in separating them indicated the number of houses. There were seven before reaching the next street.

From that corner Albert would merely have to feel for seven doors in order to find himself in front of his own! This reflection reassured him, and filled him with mischievous joy!

"Friend Churriel will be very much surprised to-morrow morning," thought he, "when I tell him that I took a stroll in the midst of this fog into which no Englishman would dare to venture!"

The thoughtless youth retraced his steps and set forth again, finding a new pleasure in this nocturnal ramble. The certainty of being alone out of doors in immense London gave him courage to loose hold of the fence which served him like the clue of Ariadne, so as to walk more at his ease. What was there to fear, in any case? No step was to be heard, no lamp was shining, the city was dead, enveloped in this humid shroud woven by the water-sprites of its great river. The young man improvised variations on this poetic theme. All of a sudden he began to shiver. The cold was bitter, and he concluded to go back to the house.

Albert counted the houses in returning from right to left, according to the system

he had devised, but at the fourth a large open space extended before him, the line of fences suddenly stopped. Where could he be?

In an instant the horrible truth became plain to him; while pursuing the train of his thoughts he had forgotten his landmark for a minute, for an hour, perhaps! *He was no longer in his own street!*

Despairing of the hopeless situation in which he had involved himself, the young man continued to wander without knowing whither. A flame was flickering and glowing a little distance, and he directed his steps as best he might towards this glimmer of safety. A tall policeman, motionless as an antique statue of a lamp-bearer, was holding a lantern in his hand.

"Could you tell me where Albany Street is?" asked Albert in a hesitating voice and very bad English.

"Second corner to your left," replied the policeman, who possibly misunderstood him. That was strange! Albert did not think he had gone so far. He stammered his thanks and resumed his solitary march in the obscurity. Always guided by the fences, to which he now clung without ever loosing

hold, he found a first, and then a second corner.

At last! Here was Albany Street! All he had to do now was to stop before the seventh door in order to re-enter Mr. Chur-ril's house.

Firmly resolved never again to commit such a piece of folly, the young man counted carefully the seven openings in the fence, drew out his key, and with a profound sigh of relief found that it fitted the lock exactly. After a slight resistance the door noiselessly opened. He closed it in the same way and groped for the candle and matches he had prepared for his return. They had disappeared!

Uneasy at first, he finally concluded that some domestic who had been the unseen witness of his prank had determined to amuse himself at his expense, and he began to feel his way upstairs to his room. He reached the first story, but, curiously enough, it seemed as if there were more steps than usual. In the middle of the landing his fingers encountered a door which to the best of his remembrance should have been on the other side, and then he suddenly remembered

that at Mr. Churriel's house the railing of the banisters was covered with velvet, while the one his hands had just been resting on was of polished wood!

Drops of perspiration broke out on his forehead, his hair stood up on his head on discovering these indications that he had entered a strange house at midnight!

Confused murmurs reached his ears. Doubtless the inmates were just ending the festivities of Christmas. What excuse could he offer for his presence? They would certainly mistake him for a thief. Flight was his only chance of safety. Holding his breath, Albert went down stairs again on tip-toe.

All of a sudden he trod on something soft, which writhed, twitched nervously, and then a fiendish caterwauling resounded through the dwelling. Paralyzed by fear, Albert stood still. Just opposite a door opened wide and a flood of light illuminated the landing.

Two forms made their appearance in the opening, and this time,—yes, this time,—the young man believed himself the sport of some frightful nightmare, for the

two sinister faces confronting him were daubed completely black. The smaller of these fantastic beings held a lamp above its head, the other carried in its hand a long Catalan knife.

"What are you doing here?" asked the latter in a threatening tone.

"Excuse me," replied Albert, striving to collect his wits. "I lost myself in the fog and mistook the door. I thought I was at home."

"Do you know Sir Roger?"

"I know nobody here; I am a foreigner who have been in London only two days."

"Are you alone?"

"Quite alone."

"He is telling the truth," affirmed the companion of the man with the knife, after leaning over the banister to verify this assertion of the young Frenchman; "he is probably some drunken fellow who has lost his way."

A short deliberation in an undertone followed these words. Suddenly, the first speaker collared Albert, and with extraordinary vigor pushed him inside the room, the door of which he closed.

The oppressive sense of being in a bad dream which the young man had experienced on beholding this unexpected double apparition, was far from being dispelled by the aspect of the room into the middle of which he stumbled.

With a rapid glance his eye took in even the slightest details of the scene. Bottles and glasses stood on a table surrounded by rolls of gold coin and piles of banknotes. Against the wall stood a secretary with open doors and empty drawers, which had plainly been robbed. In one corner lay a female servant motionless, hands and feet bound and face half-covered by a thick gag, intended to stifle her cries. Extended on a sofa another rigid form outlined itself under the folds of a brown covering. It was that of a girl of thirteen or fourteen, whose black hair had been loosened by the struggles she had made to defend herself. Her eyes were closed, and she seemed to be asleep. She was so pale one might have thought her dead.

Albert shuddered on recognizing this frightful situation. His evil star had conducted him to a scene of pillage, perhaps of murder!

The burglars whose exploits had been interrupted by his unexpected entrance, had blackened their faces in order to escape recognition in case of accident. What was to be done? He had no weapon, and each of his adversaries now brandished a revolver.

"Wretches!" he exclaimed in French, instinctively returning to his native tongue under the stress of emotion, "leave this house, or I will call for assistance!"

At first they did not understand his words, but the expressive gesture by which they were accompanied rendered them perfectly intelligible. The stronger of the robbers sprang upon him, and, after an unequal struggle, threw him, half-strangled, on the carpet.

"Answer," said he in a deep voice, putting the point of his Spanish knife to Albert's breast, "answer, and be sure not to tell any lies. Your life hangs on a thread, on the edge of this knife. Who are you?"

"I have told you already. I am a French traveller just arrived from Paris."

"How did you happen to come in here? Explain yourself; you have no time to lose."

Which, for that matter, Albert understood already.

He replied briefly: "I thought I was in Albany Street, and supposed myself to recognize the house I live in. What deceived me was that my pass-key opened the door."

"That might be," said the other, who seemed of a more conciliatory disposition.

"Well, keep still. If you move, if you breathe a sigh, you are a dead man."

Albert could do nothing but obey. Hence he remained motionless and silent, believing that his last hour had come.

While the robbers resumed their whispered conversation, his glance involuntarily fixed itself attentively upon the face of the child, which was fully lighted up by a lamp burning on the table.

She was a radiantly beautiful young girl. Never did a purer profile proceed from the brush of Raphael, the painter of virgins. Her lowered lashes cast a shadow on her cheeks. Between the pink nostril and the upper lip, moved occasionally by a nervous tremor, a little black mark, a natural beauty-spot, interrupted the dull pallor of her complexion.

The second robber had taken a bottle and half filled a glass.

"Do not shed blood," said he; "this is the better way out of it."

"Do you think there is enough?" asked his companion.

"Certainly; the dose is twice as strong as the one given the child."

"Very well, let it be that way."

The man with the cutlass again approached Albert and offered him the glass.

"Swallow that without any nonsense," commanded he in a rough voice.

"Then you mean to poison me?" groaned the unlucky fellow.

"It is not poison, I give you my word. Drink!"

"No, never!"

"Obey, or you are a dead man!"

And, presenting the glass with one hand and laying the barrel of his pistol against Albert's temple with the other, the burglar added:

"Choose."

Albert drank down at one swallow this liquid, which tasted like an opiate, and threw away the glass.

"Better and better," grinned his tormentor. "Now that you have been very prudent, good night!"

And, thanks to the effect of the drug he had just imbibed, night soon descended on the eyes and likewise on the brain of the young man. A strange heaviness seized possession of his limbs, his head seemed to roll on his shoulders. The last image reflected on his eyeballs was that of the young girl asleep at a little distance in the same deadly slumber that was gaining upon him.

The enchantment produced by a passing delirium caused him to forget the place where he found himself. Fascinated by that sweet and tragic face, he lost sight of the horrible scene surrounding him. Vague reminiscences of legends told him in childhood crossed his mind. It seemed to him that she had been sleeping for a century under the spell of some wicked fairy, and that he was the prince elected by Destiny to break the magic circle by which she was surrounded. Then the vision became less and less distinct, shaded off into gray on a background of shadow, and Albert saw nothing, felt nothing more. He ceased to think.

CHAPTER II.

AWAKENING.

HE was not dead, for long after the hours of affright we have just described, a vague consciousness of himself returned. At first it was a sensation of uneasiness, a dull ache in the back and shoulders. Stretching out his hand, it encountered the smooth boards of a camp bed on which he was lying.

With an effort he raised his heavy eyelids, then shut them, blinking under the strong light falling from a glazed opening in the wall which answered the purpose of a window, though the most agile mountebank could not have gained it in one despairing leap. Four bare gray walls surrounded him. Not a scrap of furniture, except a chair, occupied by a motionless policeman.

Unable to comprehend his presence in this unknown locality, Albert sat up and rubbed his eyes. His head felt as heavy as a ball of

lead. He put his hand to his vest pocket to consult his watch; it had disappeared.

The young man stared fixedly in front of him, trying to collect his thoughts, which were rapid, confused and incoherent. All the fogs of London seemed to be inside his head. He concluded to speak to the policeman, who watched him without moving.

"Where am I?"

"Aha! so you are coming to! It isn't much to brag of, but you have had a good nap."

"How do I happen to be here?"

"You ought to have some notion of that, it seems to me."

Albert sprang out of his plank bed with the instinctive movement of a man who forebodes danger and puts himself on the defensive.

"Better and better," said the policeman, "walk a little and it will take the stiffness out of your legs. Take a drink out of the pitcher; you must be feverish after such a drunk. Hey! what a feather in your cap!"

"I am thirsty, that's a fact," replied the Frenchman, "but I do not understand you."

He seized the stone pitcher and drank the

cold water with delight, and then, dipping his handkerchief in it, bathed his forehead.

"That will freshen your ideas," said his companion, who, unlike the generality of his kind, seemed inclined to be talkative.

Albert turned deliberately towards the door.

"Give me back my hat and watch," said he. "I must go immediately to the house of my friend, Mr. Churril, who must be in the greatest uneasiness on my account."

"Faith, I have guarded a good many prisoners, but I never saw a better actor than this one!"

"Let me pass."

The keeper could not repress a smile.

"You have plenty of cheek, *monsou*," said he, giving the Parisian the title by which his countrymen are designated by the lower classes in London. "Come now! do you fancy that one gets out of a police station as easily as he gets into it?"

"A police station! What was I arrested for? Who brought me to this place? It must be the result of a mistake. I will invoke the testimony of ——"

"Take my word for it, *monsou*, don't men-

tion any names. I must warn you that it is my duty to report all you say to the magistrate who will question you."

"Question me! A magistrate! What have I done?"

"He is an incredible actor for his age," muttered the policeman; "it won't be very easy to make him out. Luckily, old Rock has seen a good many of them."

In fact, the surprise and indignation which the keeper believed to be affected, blazed forth so truthfully from Albert's countenance that it would have required the talent of a great actor to feign them so perfectly. As he arrived at this conclusion a second policeman of gigantic stature entered the little cell and said a few words to him.

"Follow me," commanded the keeper to the young man, "the justice of the peace is waiting for you."

Completely dumfounded and reduced to passive obedience, the prisoner crossed a gloomy passage and climbed a stone staircase between the two policemen, who held him closely by the arms.

He saw confusedly a large and dismal

room into which the gray daylight entered through dim window-panes, piles of dusty papers heaped on tables, policemen, busy clerks, and then a door opened, and he was introduced into the office of the police commissioner. Half concealed by the bureau behind which he was running over the report of the police, a man of sixty, with a waxen face surrounded by white whiskers, gave him a scrutinizing glance.

"Your name?"

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" inquired the young man.

"You are not here to ask questions, but to answer them."

"My name is Albert Dorian."

"Your age?"

"Eighteen years."

"Your address?"

"I live in Paris with my father, a merchant in Rue St. Honoré."

"But where do you live here?"

Albert named the friend whose guest he was.

The name of Mr. Churriel surprised the commissioner. Nevertheless he went on with his questions in the monotonous tone ac-

quired by those who are performing a daily and irksome task.

"Explain to me what you were doing in No. 37 Portland Terrace, where you were arrested last night."

"Portland Terrace," repeated the young man, mechanically. "I do not know what you mean."

"Do not pretend ignorance. You were found dead-drunk in the house of Sir Roger Lothbury, where, availing yourself of his absence, you entered under cover of the fog, in company with two accomplices, to rob, and to do worse still, perhaps!"

These clear and measured phrases fell like so many rays of light into Albert's brain, and began to awaken shadowy recollections. He clasped his hands to his head, tottered, and sank into a chair.

"He is going to own up," whispered the policeman to his companion.

And now Albert recalled one by one the events of the previous night. He disentangled them, so to say, through the stupor into which the drug had thrown his mind. Yes! That youth wrapped in a cloak, wandering through the streets of a city as dead as Pom-

peii after its two thousand years of burial, was himself. And suddenly, his groping entrance into a strange house, the brusque scene, violently illuminated, of the drawing room pillaged by thieves with blackened faces, the woman bound and groaning heavily who lay on the carpet, the insensible young girl rolled up like a bundle in a covering of brown wool, all this passed before his mind with the rapidity of lightning. For a moment he remained silent with bowed head, dejected, in the attitude of despair. He comprehended everything, now!

Long accustomed to these stage tricks, he whom the policeman had familiarly called "old Rock," in his aside, did not at first disturb the young man's reflections. He bent towards the secretary who, sitting at a table near him was taking down the answers of the accused, and directed his attention to the latter's face. At last he spoke:

"Well, what have you to say?"

"So, it was not a dream! I really saw that!"

"Answer!"

"Sir, I am innocent. I am the victim, or, rather, one of the victims, of criminals."

"How do you explain the presence of these banknotes, this gold, this poniard, which were found in your pockets?"

"What! A weapon found on me?"

"Here it is. Do you recognize this knife?"

The magistrate took from his desk a poniard with a tapering blade and offered it to the accused. It was the one the black man had pressed against his breast.

"I am the victim of a frightful plot," cried Albert, quite beside himself. "Listen! That poniard is the one with which I was threatened in order to force me to swallow a narcotic. These banknotes must have been put into my pockets to divert your attention from the real robbers by piling up proofs on my head. Alas! I am a gentleman, and you are taking me for a murderer!"

He stopped. Sobs which he could not contain shook his entire body.

"A clever defence for a man taken in the act," muttered the impassible Mr. Rock. "Be so good as to listen to the report of the police," he continued:

"About noon yesterday, Sir Roger Lothbury went to spend the day with friends, leaving at home, in charge of a confidential

servant, his granddaughter, Ellena Morgan, who had been prevented from accompanying him by a slight illness.

“About ten o'clock in the evening, the house was entered by three persons who gagged the servant, stole the money, and abducted the child. You were one of the three. The description given by Annie Raven, Sir Roger's housekeeper, fits you exactly. She says you seemed to be intoxicated, and that this was probably the reason why you were unable to make your escape with your accomplices. They went off and carried the child along. You were found asleep amidst a lot of empty bottles; this knife, used by you to force the lock of the secretary, was found upon you. The traces of the performance are visible on it. See here, what have you to say to all this? Do you still deny it?”

The charge was overwhelming. All the accused could do was to describe in detail what had happened to him after his imprudent exit from the house of Mr. Churril until the moment when he lost consciousness. The commissioner listened to this improbable account with a smile, and as Albert, with tears in his eyes, entreated to be set at liberty, in-

voking the names of his father and mother, who might be crushed by such unexpected tidings, he quietly replied:

“We are going on with the investigation of this crime. Until I can verify your assertions I am obliged to retain you in custody.”

Half dead with shame, the young man was led away by the policemen and put in jail.

CHAPTER III.

THE INVESTIGATION.

THERE he remained three days, his head in his hands, without sleeping, scarcely touching the food placed near him, sometimes as inert as a corpse, sometimes exasperated to fury.

He was thinking of the blot of infamy with which his father's name was about to be tainted; he was recalling his gay studio comrades, separated from him perhaps forever; he was evoking the honest faces of his London friends on which cordiality was replaced by an expression of amazement and disgust. In the frenzy of his anguish he was tempted to dash his brains out against the walls rather than resign himself to an iniquitous condemnation. At last he became absorbed in prayer, that supreme resource of troubled souls, and a degree of calmness returned which he made use of to prepare the argu-

ments by which he hoped to repel the accusation.

In the afternoon of the fourth day he was brought before the examining magistrate in the prison van. This honorable magistrate had the minutes of his first examination read to him, and inquired whether he recognized them as correct. On his replying in the affirmative, he renewed his questions:

"Tell us the names of your accomplices," said he; "that is the surest way to win our good will for yourself."

"How can I?" replied Albert. "I have no accomplices, being myself the victim of these robbers. I never saw them but once in all my life, and I would be unable to recognize them again, since they were disguised under a layer of soot."

"You are unwilling to betray them. Perhaps you dread their vengeance? Be easy about that, we can find them without you."

"God grant it, for then my innocence will be made plain to everybody!"

"Summon Sir Roger Lothbury," said the judge.

An old man of seventy was introduced, whose emaciated features bore the impress of

rare distinction. He came forward trembling, and leaning on the shoulder of the secretary, who offered him an armchair.

"Do you recognize the man whom the police arrested in your drawing-room on Christmas night?" asked the magistrate in a tone of mingled respect and pity.

Sir Roger turned towards Albert a pair of dim eyes in the depths of which shone, nevertheless, a spark of indignation.

"It is certainly he," was his reply in a trembling voice.

"I do not know you, sir," stammered the unfortunate young man. "Was it in your house that this abominable scene took place?"

Overcome by indescribable emotion, the old man rose to his full height and went straight towards him with contracted, imploring hands.

"Wretch," he cried, "the gold you took from me I resign to you. I will give you twice as much, I will cover you with it if necessary, but give me back my child, the daughter of my blood. Tell me, what have you done with her?"

"What!" exclaimed Albert, "that victim who seemed dead or asleep on a sofa was —"

"My daughter's daughter, an orphan, the only thing I cared for in this world. They have stolen her from me! Ah! if your heart is not of stone, have pity on my old age; speak, where have they hidden her? is she still living?"

At these words Sir Roger fell on his knees at the feet of the supposed assassin. The latter made a movement as if to raise him, but the policeman in charge laid a firm hand on his shoulder and kept him in his place.

"Poor man," said Albert, "I would give my life to find her, to aid you in your search, but what can I do?"

"They have doubtless carried her off as a hostage to intimidate you," said the examining magistrate, coldly, to Sir Roger.

"Fix any price you like for denouncing them," implored the old man; "I will give my fortune to ransom her."

Albert was about to reply by an indignant protest, but the magistrate interrupted him:

"Bring in Annie Raven and her husband," said he.

Two new personages entered the room. One, wearing the livery of a good family, was a robust, thick-set man of about forty, with

red hair, a powerful jaw, and crafty eyes. The other, his wife, was not over thirty. She was an insipid blonde, with thin lips and eyes of a china blue. She seemed greatly moved. Both recognized Albert without hesitation as the man who had taken part in the crime of Portland Terrace, and verbally renewed their written depositions.

Jack Raven, the coachman, supported, moreover, by the testimony of his master, declared under oath that on Christmas day he had driven Sir Roger to the house of his friends in St. John's Wood, to spend the day. They started to return about ten o'clock in the evening, but meanwhile a thick fog had covered the whole city, and he lost his way. Obligated to walk and lead the horse by its bridle for fear of accidents, he was not able to reach Portland Terrace before one o'clock in the morning. On his arrival the house was completely dark. He found the apartment on the first floor story all upside down, his wife groaning and bound hand and foot, the drawers empty, Miss Ellena gone, and this man sleeping heavily, surrounded by the traces of an orgy. The sight of the empty bottles convinced him that the burglar was

drunk. After binding him fast without any resistance on his part, Jack hastened to notify the police.

"Are you sure of the fidelity of your servants?" said the judge to Sir Roger.

"I answer for that as if it were my own," replied the old man excitedly. "I have the greatest esteem for them. They have served me since their youth; I married them. They saw my grandchild, my poor Ellena, born. They loved her so much that I was almost jealous." His voice was extinguished in tears.

"Let Annie Raven speak," said the judge to the housekeeper. It was some time before she could do so, being half stifled with sobs.

"Excuse me, Your Honor," she said at last, "but when I think of our poor young miss, so good, so kind to everybody. An angel that perhaps we shall never see again—"

"Be quiet, Annie," interrupted her master, "you break my heart!"

"Tell what you know about the accused."

"I saw him come in; he was the third to enter the drawing-room, after a great outcry which was the signal agreed on. At that moment I was already gagged and made power-

less. The two others went to meet him, and brought him back."

"Since you have such a good memory," cried Albert, "you should have stated that they were blackened with soot, while I was not disguised! If I had been of their party, I would evidently have taken the same precaution to avoid recognition."

Annie remained confused for a moment, then she replied sedately:

"I suppose it was your business to keep watch on the outside while the thing was done, and you were afraid of attracting attention."

"But," resumed the accused, clinging desperately to this last plank of safety, "you are neither dumb nor blind, madam! You were there, at all events; you clearly understood the explanation I gave them of my presence when they questioned me, and the threats and indignant reproaches I addressed to them! You must have seen me rush to the assistance of the fainting young girl, fighting without weapons against two adversaries until overcome."

The more vehemence Albert imparted to his protests, the more calm and reserved be-

came the demeanor of the housekeeper, and the more imperturbably cool her replies.

"I was so confused," she said, "that I did not notice details. My gag covered my face, I was almost stifled. I do remember that the men quarreled and fought, as you say. It was when they were dividing the booty, I suppose."

"It was before you, it was in your presence that they forced me, pistol at my head, to drink a narcotic to prevent me from giving the alarm after their departure. Do you not remember any more?"

"I saw you drink with them, and that is all I know. They took Miss Ellena away afterwards, and I heard the noise of a retreating cab. You had rolled on the carpet, and were unable to follow them. I do not know you, sir, I never saw you before. Why should I accuse you except in the interests of truth?"

Albert was reduced to silence. The testimony he had invoked had turned against him. He had no reason to suspect the sincerity of the witness. In the bewilderment caused by fright, things might have appeared to her in this way. And yet his honor and his liberty

were at stake. He resolved to struggle to the utmost to defend them.

"The drink they forced me to take was a narcotic," he protested, "and the young girl must have taken a similar dose, for otherwise how could one explain that persistent slumber which was not disturbed by the shouts and tumult of an atrocious struggle? Her drowsiness was unnatural. I am sure that she had been put to sleep so as to paralyze resistance and carry her off more easily."

"Miss Ellena was not asleep, but fainting. When those men broke into the room, when she saw me struggling in their hands, she lost consciousness."

"Were the bottles preserved?" asked the judge. "A chemical analysis would quickly show whether one contained a sleeping dose."

"No, Your Honor," replied Jack Raven. "The robbers not having patience to use a corkscrew, doubtless found it more expeditious to break the necks of the bottles. As these bottles were useless, they were thrown away."

"That was wrong," observed the magistrate severely. "The police ought to have prevented it."

"The arrest was made at one o'clock in the morning, and not under ordinary circumstances," protested one of the policemen affected by this criticism of his superior. "When we returned some hours later to make a search, the flasks had disappeared."

"I could not suppose that they would be of the slightest importance," added Annie. "It was part of my business to put the drawing-room in order."

"You see, Albert Dorian," resumed the judge, addressing the accused, "your line of defence cannot be maintained. It would be more prudent, it would be better worth your while, to try that of confession."

"And I," returned Albert, raising his head and looking proudly at his accusers, "will prove by the testimony of Mr. Churriel, and that of my father and the honorable people among whom I have lived until now, the utter absurdity of this monstrous supposition. I am neither a gambler nor a spendthrift. I am an honest man, wholly devoted to my art. Moreover, I have money; more than I need, in fact. Why should I risk my liberty to take that of others for which I have no use? What interest would I have in conniving at

the disappearance of a child whom I do not know? Besides, in the three days I spent in this city I scarcely went out of my friend Churril's house, so that I could not have an interview with any one, still less with lawless persons with intent to commit a crime. If I had been one of them, would they have deserted me on the very spot of the crime? Since a cab was waiting for them, could they not have taken me along as well as their unhappy victim, the young girl, instead of letting me fall into your hands with the fear that I might turn 'Queen's evidence,' and denounce them in order to obtain my own acquittal? Truly, it amazes me that men so intelligent could fall into such a stupid snare. My innocence stares one in the face. The security with which the crime was executed proves that those who committed it knew all about the animals and the inhabitants of the house, of that house whose very existence I was not aware of. It is your business to find them. As for me, after doing my best to prevent the crime of which chance made me a witness, I fell asleep under the effects of a diabolical drug which certainly was not there merely by accident. I heard one of the

scoundrels ask the other: 'Is there enough of it?'—and his accomplice replied in an undertone: 'There is twice as much as we gave the child.' When I heard them, I supposed that it was poison, and that they preferred that method of silencing me to the noise of a pistol in the frightful quiet of that night. I drank, I believed I was going to die, and I only waked up in your jail, from which, one way or another, I must be released. Now, listen to my words: Once free, I swear by all I hold most sacred to undertake my revenge in person, to give myself no rest until I have cleared up this horrible mystery in which I find myself mixed up against my will!"

"Take away the accused," said the judge.

Still trembling with noble indignation, Albert, suitably escorted, re-entered the prison van, which returned him to the jail.

Greatly impressed by his last words, Sir Roger Lothbury drew near the magistrate, who was leaning with his elbows on his desk in profound reflection.

"If what that young man affirms is true," he murmured, "he must be suffering moral tortures, and his fate seems to me almost as pitiful as my own."

"You cannot imagine the tricks of which malefactors are capable when it is a question of baffling an investigation," replied the judge. "Foreigners especially! To listen to them, they are all gentlemen of good family, arrested by mistake. The system is well-known."

"But it should be easy to verify their assertions."

"I have telegraphed to Paris and am awaiting information. I have sent word to Mr. Churril to come to my office."

"If he has been lying, the accused must know that you will discover it before long. What advantage could he gain?"

"How do I know? gain time, perhaps, to allow his accomplices to put your grandchild in a secure place."

"Alas! What could be the object of using so much trickery to serve so black a crime?"

"You are rich, Sir Roger. Doubtless they want to make you pay 'hush-money.' Go back home and wait for news."

"You may withdraw," added the judge, addressing the two domestics, who went away, supporting the feeble steps of their master. Hardly had they left the room when Mr.

Churriel sent in his card to the magistrate. He was received with due respect, and replied to the questions asked by a sober and dignified deposition, which the secretary recorded in these terms :

“ Mr. Churriel declares that he received, December 23d, the visit of Mr. A. Dorian, whose perfect respectability he knows. Mr. Dorian, who came from Paris, lived for three days with the Churriel family, sleeping and taking his meals in the house.

“ Mr. Churriel affirms that on Christmas evening he accompanied his friend to the door of his chamber. His absence was not known until the following morning, when some one went to call him to breakfast. He can attribute this nocturnal sortie in a fog to nothing but a momentary cerebral disturbance. Mr. Dorian, usually very abstemious, was completely self-possessed when Mr. Churriel quitted him.”

The worthy man used all his influence with the magistrate to obtain the immediate release of the young Frenchman.

“ Humph ! ” replied the Right Honorable, “ I am, in fact, very much afraid that I shall have to abandon this track. However, that will

depend on a telegram which I expect from Paris this very day. It is possible that tomorrow you may dine with your protégé, but you must admit, in this case, that the innocent whim of playing hide-and-seek might have cost him dear by his own fault, and that, considering the circumstances, the police could not have taken a different course!"

CHAPTER IV.

* THE SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE WOOD.*

ON the following day Albert, released with apologies, was driven to No. 97, Albany Street, where he found his father, who had come in all haste at the first alarm. He was received with great joy, but the same evening, feeling the necessity of banishing the painful thoughts which oppressed him, the young man took the express to France. There, casting himself headlong into fashionable life, he sought to forget his mishap amidst what it has been agreed to style "the Parisian movement."

Alas! neither the opera nor the Bois, neither balls nor races, could banish from his memory the impression received during that terrible night of Christmas, nor the shame and humiliation which had befallen him. If it had concerned no one but himself, he might soon have become indifferent to the

consequences of the crime classified at Scotland Yard under the name of "Portland Terrace Case—Abduction and burglary." But the irritation he felt in recalling the uncere-
monious way in which the scoundrels had dis-
posed of his honor and liberty, dearer to him
than life, gave way to gloomy melancholy
when Albert, thinking of Miss Ellena, tried
to imagine what fate was reserved for a young
girl of her birth and singular beauty.

In what den had these ravishers hidden
her? How could she live alone and defence-
less in the midst of their moral depravity?
Was she dead? In the anguish he endured
on account of the child, Albert could often
have longed that this might be true.

He had subscribed to the two principal
London journals and read with untiring at-
tention the articles published under the title:
The Courts. This daily exercise familiarized
him more and more with the English lan-
guage, but at the same time it kept his mind
in a sort of unhealthy attention to a particu-
lar object.

Albert was the victim of a fixed idea.

His worthy parents were disturbed by his
taciturnity and his morbid pallor, not know-

ing their cause; since, through fear of distressing them, he never confided to them the subject by which he was pre-occupied.

Endowed with a logical and judicial mind, the young artist had resumed in imagination the defective investigation made by the examining magistrate in his own case, and, in spite of everything, there gradually forced itself upon him a conviction, although he was unable to offer, even to himself, any evidence of its truth.

"I cannot openly accuse the Ravens of having connived with the burglars," reflected he. "The woman's explanation seemed plausible to everybody, and the bitterness with which she rebutted my arguments was natural if she really believed herself to be addressing the guilty man.

"And her husband, absent since morning and never leaving Sir Roger all day, could not be suspected, either.

"And yet, *the thing was done by persons who knew how things went on in the house.* What is to be thought of that sudden illness which came on just in time to prevent the young girl from going with her grandfather to the house of his friends? and about that

coachman, who got lost as if to give time for the job to be accomplished? Humph!

"Who was interested in getting rid of the orphan? Isn't there a maxim which says: 'Find out who will profit by the wrong'? No doubt that child was the direct heiress of the old man. If I can rely on the information given by the newspapers which interested themselves in the affair, Ellena was the daughter of Captain Reginald Morgan, killed in Africa at the taking of Khartum, and of Mrs. Louise Morgan, born Lothbury, only daughter of Sir Roger, likewise deceased. Who is left near this rich septuagenarian if not those two servants who inspired him with so much affection and confidence? Humph!"

From this it will be plain by what doubts and suspicions the mind of the young man was racked. During his sleepless hours at night, he was haunted by an image which seemed to outline itself on the shadowy background of the hangings of his room. Constantly he seemed to see once more, illuminated by a smoky lamp, the pure and delicate profile of her whom he had been unable to wrest from the hands of destiny.

As happens after certain intense emotions,

the harmonious lines of this countenance had been impressed indelibly upon his brain, and whenever, despairing of the case, the young artist tried to resume his work, his brush would produce nothing else. Meanwhile, the lapse of time lessened his grief. Three years went by in this way. A sort of moral numbness had succeeded the feverishness of the first months.

Albert experienced a sort of melancholy happiness in painting from memory the portrait of Ellena Morgan. He had devoted a whole year to it, never finding the work perfect enough to suit him. He had represented her extended on a Gothic bed of state, wrapped in her lethargic slumber. A wilderness of vegetation had invaded the chamber of her repose, twining about the oaken columns of the bed and half concealing the body of the young girl, as if to withdraw her from profane eyes, and leaving in full light nothing but her radiant head. It was before this work that Albert loved to meditate in gloomy hours of discouragement and fatigue. He had covered it with drapery and never showed it to any one.

One day, however, enlightened by certain allusions of the elder Dorian, his eminent professor, who had been dining with the family, expressed a desire to see this picture. Through deference for him, the young painter drew aside the velvet curtain covering his work.

The great artist remained stupefied.

"They accuse you of indolence at the atelier," he exclaimed, "and I myself have lamented your indifference to our art, for you have the stuff in you for a painter of the first order. I did not suspect that you were elaborating a masterpiece on the sly! On my word of honor, I would like to have painted that! It must be sent to the next Salon, and I promise you the medal for your first exhibition."

Confused, Albert knew not what to answer. He stammered:

"I painted that portrait for myself alone. No one but you, dear master, has been allowed to see it. I did not intend it for the crowd."

"Then it is a portrait?" resumed Gérôme, "I took it for a work of imagination!"

And, after examining it anew, he added:

"In what hidden corner of Tuscany did you find this model? Is it possible that such an assemblage of regular features really exists?"

His pupil briefly recounted the events described in our first chapter, details which interested Gérôme deeply.

"Exhibit your work," he advised. "Who knows? Hundreds of thousands of visitors go to the Salon; it might assist you to recover your heroine."

This consideration, coming from lips so authoritative, decided the young man.

The following May-day all Paris was admiring a canvas at the palace of the Champs-Élysées which was signed, "A. Dorian," and set down in the catalogue under the title: "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood." It was a great success for Albert, whose comrades were enthusiastic in their congratulations.

As he was leaving the exposition, a well-known singer took his arm and drew him under the shade of the trees in the Champs-Élysées.

"I congratulate you," said he, "you have produced a remarkable work, but how did

you obtain permission to paint that young person? I thought I was the only one to whom that favor had been granted."

Albert trembled from head to foot.

"You know her, then?" he asked in an unsteady voice.

"Yes, I made a crayon portrait of her with the consent of the director and the chief warden."

"In what place?"

"Doubtless in the same place as you—the St. Anne Asylum."

"What! in an insane asylum?"

The singer stopped and stared at his companion, whose surprise was incomprehensible to him.

"Perhaps you knew her before she was confined there," said he, "and yet that was two years ago."

"But she is not mad, you must be mistaken. It is probably a chance resemblance!"

"Come with me to my rooms in Rue St. Lazare and judge for yourself."

They hailed a cab and drove thither at full speed.

No sooner had they arrived than Mr. L.

opened an album and began to turn over its leaves. The pages were covered with cleverly-made pencil sketches of human faces wearing bestial expressions, some of them convulsed with hysteria, others distorted with a stupid grin.

"They are documents," he explained, "which I am collecting to illustrate a work on the insane. You know that my brother and I give several concerts every year at the St. Anne Asylum. Music has a surprising influence on these unfortunates. Ah! here is our subject at last."

Albert uttered a cry of surprise. He had before his eyes a portrait of Ellena Morgan, which was as striking a likeness as his own. Those large eyes, shaded by long lashes, that mouth at once innocent and serious, that oval contour, could not possibly belong to any other creature in the world. And yet he longed to resist the evidence.

"This little brown spot is doubtless a slip of the pencil, a spot on the paper?" he asked with hesitation.

"No," replied his friend, "it is a mark which exists between the nose and the upper lip."

"There can be no more doubt," groaned Albert. "Ah! the wretches!"

"What ails you?" cried L., who saw that he was on the point of falling.

"I cannot tell you now, I will explain later on. Get me a glass of water, please."

The singer brought him a glass of sugar and water, which Albert swallowed at a gulp. Then he said hastily:

"My dear L., will you give me the greatest possible proof of friendship I could ask?"

"I am at your disposal."

"Present me to the director of the asylum as your friend. I must, you understand, *I must* get immediate information concerning this unfortunate."

Mr. L. comprehended that he was witnessing a scene in a private drama. He was too discreet to ask for explanations. Looking at his watch, he replied:

"It is too late; the director would not receive us to-day. But come for me in a cab to-morrow morning about ten, and we will go to him together."

After thanking him warmly, Albert betook himself to the boulevards, where he wandered up and down, more solitary amidst

the fashionable throng than if he were lost in a forest.

"So, that is what they have done: made her mad? What a mass of loathing and of ill-treatment is represented by the degradation of that exquisite creature, formed for the sweetest joys of life, and reduced to the condition of a mere animal!"

These and similar reflections made him forget the dinner-hour. He returned home very late, pleaded indisposition and went to bed, but healthy slumber did not visit him. He spent a night of torture, during which he seemed to be belaboring with his fists faces black with soot. The sallow countenance of Annie Raven with its cold eyes and snaky mouth often came before his fevered fancy, and then again, and repeatedly, the sculptur-esque profile of Ellena! At the thought of seeing her to-morrow his heart bounded with strength and courage.

Mad! doubtless the moral shock caused by terror had been too violent, her childish reason had been overthrown. To him she seemed only the more worthy of pity.

"Oh!" he said to himself, "I will be her deliverer and her avenger. It was not in vain

that chance threw me across her path and mingled her destiny with mine without her knowledge. I feel it, God has chosen me to become the instrument of His designs, the executor of His judgments!"

In the morning he dressed early. Unable to remain quiet, he left the house under pretext of going to the Beaux-Arts, and walked a league in Paris without becoming calm. At ten he rang at his friend's door.

Mr. L. noticed the swollen eyes and the pallor of the young artist, but, as on the previous evening, he refrained from questioning him.

"Come along!" he exclaimed, picking up his hat, "I see from your impatience that we have no time to lose."

"Don't forget your album," advised the artist, "we may need it."

At St. Anne, the name of the singer, well-known and highly esteemed there, was an "open sesame" which unlocked all doors. The director received his visitors with the utmost politeness and waited for them to explain the object of their visit.

"Sir," said Albert, going straight to the point, "you are detaining at this asylum a young girl said to be insane. I knew her

when in possession of her mind, and I am acquainted with her family. Will you allow me to see her?"

"I would ask nothing better," said the director, "provided the doctor is willing, which we can easily find out from an attendant. What is her name?"

"Ellena Morgan."

The head of the asylum seemed to be consulting his memory; then he turned over the pages of a register, and at last replied:

"We have no one inscribed under that name."

"No matter," exclaimed the young artist, "they doubtless sent her to you under a false name. I have good reasons for supposing so."

He opened the album to the page on which was sketched the poor lunatic he was searching for.

"Louise Davy!" exclaimed the director, "in fact I recognize her. She was interned here for two years, but she is not here now."

"What happened to her?" asked Albert, trembling.

"Nothing but what is quite natural. Her derangement being very mild, Miss Davy per-

formed all the ordinary functions of life like a sane person. Her appearance did not indicate her mental condition. The only evidence of cerebral derangement was a continual silence, the absence of memory, an absolute incapacity to draw conclusions from facts. Her attention had to be called to people and things before she seemed to see them. She would rise, dress herself, eat and sleep at regular hours as if mechanically obeying a fixed habit, an impulse formerly received, but her almost childish inconsequence was dangerous only to herself, although it rendered her incapable of mingling in ordinary society unless directed by another. I think she was a foreigner. She scarcely spoke except in monosyllables, and used either French or English indifferently, but she pronounced our language with a slight English accent. Her relatives being employed away from home, and too poor to hire a guardian, brought her here with a letter from Dr. B., the alienist, certifying her mental condition."

"Her relatives, you say?"

"It was a long time before they came to see her. Besides, as far as she was able to express either preference or aversion, their

presence seemed displeasing to her, although they made a great display of affection. At last, at the end of two years, their fortune seemed to improve, for they took measures to have the child returned to them, and, seeing the inoffensive character of her mania, their request, which was to their credit, was acceded to. She whom you are looking for is no longer under our charge."

"Can you tell me, sir, where her relatives live?"

"No. 22 Rue Vintimille," replied the director, glancing at the open register in front of him.

Albert rose as if every minute lost might render him responsible for a misfortune.

"I thank you," said he, "for your courtesy and the information you have kindly afforded me. Will you excuse the haste with which I take my leave? Your own moments are precious, and just now mine are worth years."

The director accompanied them into the hall leading to his office. Almost running, Albert crossed the immense court and sprang into their cab.

"Where are we going?" asked L.

"22 Rue Vintimille," shouted Albert to the driver. "I will give you twenty-five francs extra if you get there in a quarter of an hour!"

The honest man nearly ran into several omnibuses, and just missed wrecking his cab against one of those heavy drays which seem to bid defiance to people in a hurry, but within the time allotted he contrived to go through Paris from one end to the other, amidst the insults and invectives of his fellow cabmen, whose urbanity, as everybody knows, is not proverbial. In going up Rue Amsterdam, Albert advised him to slacken his pace, since for obvious reasons, he did not wish to attract the attention of those who might be interested in his call.

"My dear L.," said he to the singer, "one more service, and it will be the last. I do not wish to be recognized by the so-called relatives of this person. I will remain in the cab and do you act in my place. All that is necessary is to ask at the door whether Mr. and Mrs. Davy are at home with their daughter, and, in case of absence, at what hour one may call on them."

The cab drew up in front of a house of re-

spectable appearance, and L. made ready to accomplish his mission, but the portress interrupted him almost at the first word.

"Mr. and Mrs. Davy do not live here," said she, "they went away six months ago."

"Do you know where they live now?"

"No."

"What! Did they go away without leaving an address?"

"They said they were going to travel in the south for the health of their young lady, who is a trifle deranged."

L. drew a gold twenty-five franc piece from his vest pocket.

"I have something to tell them which is greatly to their interest," said he. "If they have confided their secret to you, you can tell it to me without fear. I am well known." He showed his card to reassure the door-keeper. His renown had penetrated from the boxes of theatres to those of portresses, for the good woman made him a smiling curtsy, but he gained nothing further from it. Her reply was evidently sincere:

"I would like nothing better than to oblige you," said she, ogling the gold piece, "but I do not know where they are. Formerly, a

registered letter used to come to them every month from England. Since their departure no letters have arrived. They were supposed to receive a small income, and they had no visitors."

Rejoining Albert, the singer made known his ill success. Albert sank back upon the cushions in violent despair.

"There is one more thing to do," suggested his friend, "if you are absolutely bent upon trying every means."

"What is it?"

"We might go to the general post-office. This Davy may have left an address there so that letters might be forwarded."

"You are right," said Albert, "I did not think of that."

And again the cab set off at furious speed.

But the search made by the clerks at the post-office was fruitless. The fugitives had left no trace behind them. A prey to the most serious dejection, Albert took his friend back home.

"What do you mean to do?" asked the latter, as they shook hands in parting.

"Go on with my search. I have a task to fulfil, and fulfilled it must be, if it cost my

life," replied Albert resolutely. And turning to the driver, whose panting horse was reeking with perspiration, he cried:

"To police headquarters as fast as you can go."

"Right you are!" replied the man. "Cocotte and I will have earned our wages!"

While the cab was rushing down towards the Seine the artist abandoned himself to his reflections. One thing, at least, he had made sure of: Ellena was still living. Then there was a hope that he might yet find her, tear her from the hands of the criminals of whom she was the victim, and restore her to the old man who mourned her loss. Assuredly these abductors had been very clever. Is there a more secure hiding-place than an insane asylum? There, beyond the reach of all investigation, the poor child was doubtless intended to spend her life out of the way of the police. It had been necessary that her beauty should have attracted the attention of a designer in order that Albert should discover that she had been at St. Anne's, thanks to the unexpected meeting between this designer and the unknown friend who had never forgotten her! This chain of extraordinary cir-

cumstances, so improbable and unforeseen, acted for that very reason as a spur to Albert's energy. He felt himself guided by a super-human power. His momentary discouragement was succeeded by an excess of confidence and enthusiasm for the task he had undertaken. He was conscious that it was difficult, but it ennobled him in his own eyes.

For what reason had the Davys withdrawn Ellena from her hiding-place? Were they afraid that the doctors might succeed in restoring her memory and her reason, and that she might talk? Did they think a grave might guard their secret better? A new enigma which he could not unriddle! Albert had arrived at this point in his reflections when the cab stopped.

He was brought into an ante-room, and sent in his card to the prefect of the police department of the Seine. His name was not unknown, for since the previous day it was prominent in all the papers, the art critics having praised at length his picture of the "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood." The prefect received him almost at once.

Without any preamble, Albert told him

the whole story of his adventure in London, and the discovery he had just made in Paris.

It happened that the magistrate had formerly been acquainted with the father of Albert, whose character he esteemed highly. Moreover he recollected the mysterious affair of Portland Terrace, having corresponded with the London police concerning Albert's respectability. Hence the latter found in M. Voisin a listener predisposed in his favor and inclined to assist him as far as lay in his power.

"What are your intentions?" asked the magistrate.

"To return to England, see Sir Roger Lothbury, and tell him that his granddaughter is living."

"Humph! that might be the way to ruin everything," interrupted M. Voisin.

Albert, somewhat abashed, made no reply.

"I admire your ardor," resumed the prefect of police, smiling, "but you are young and have no experience in these affairs. You need a safe guide, an experienced assistant, to prevent you from committing some imprudence. Well, I was at work just now with

the chief of police; I suppose you do not object to taking him into confidence?"

"On the contrary!"

M. Voisin tapped a bell, and his secretary entered.

"Ask M. Jacob to come into my cabinet for a moment," said the magistrate.

The chief of police was in the next room.

After the usual introduction he listened attentively to the young man's story.

"My dear Jacob," said M. Voisin, "aside from our own professional interest in the case, we shall be playing a good joke on the famous London detectives in making a good job of a thing they were unable to manage. There is a smack of business competition in it, don't you think?"

"It seems to me it would be easy," replied M. Jacob.

"It would be necessary to supply M. Dorian with one of your cleverest detectives, and I think it indispensable that he should speak English."

"I have the man you want," returned the chief after a moment of reflection.

"Whom are you thinking of?"

"Bistouri is the man for the situation. He

speaks English like a cockney, and as for disguises, I do not know a more skilful actor. A real Proteus!"

"Is he to be had?" asked Albert.

"He will place himself at your orders to-morrow morning," returned M. Jacob. "I especially advise you to do nothing without consulting him and to follow his advice blindly."

"Rely on me, gentlemen. I am ready for anything, provided we have a hope of success."

After thanking the two officials cordially for their kindness, the young man returned home, almost transfigured by hope. His mother noticed at once the change in his appearance and could not conceal her joy. Unwilling to disturb her, Albert resolved not to give the real reason for the journey he intended making.

"Dear mother," said he, "I met a rich picture dealer of Regent Street at the Salon, who has promised to give me an important order."

"That does not surprise me," interrupted his father in an explosion of artless pride. "Since varnishing day nobody talks of any-

thing but you and your 'Sleeping Beauty in the Wood.' Your name is in every mouth; I am proud of my son."

"I expect a communication from him tomorrow morning," went on Albert; "I am going with him to see his collection."

"What! going back to London!" exclaimed his father, looking gloomy. "Staying in that city has not been very lucky for you!"

"Don't be anxious, either of you," said the young artist, embracing them. "This is May, not the season for fogs. I am a man now, and I have received a lesson I shall never forget. Besides, I shall not be gone long."

Albert's parents attributed his new interest in life to his success at the Salon, and told each other that in executing the new pictures of which he told them his mind would be diverted from his fixed idea; a reflection which made parting with him less painful.

CHAPTER V.

BISTOURI'S EXPLOITS.

ALBERT had just finished dressing himself next morning when the servant who was to pack his valise announced that an old gentleman of respectable appearance wished to speak with him in the salon. Suspecting a bore,—one of those idlers who come to buttonhole us just when our minds are occupied with some important matter,—the artist made a grimace and went thither, resolved to cut the interview as short as possible, since he was expecting the police inspector whose assistance M. Jacob had promised, and did not wish to waste his time. As he entered, a gentleman who seemed upwards of sixty, correctly dressed in a serge suit, a spring overcoat, neatly gloved, a flower in his buttonhole, a tourist's opera glass slung across his shoulder, bowed and advanced a few steps to meet him. Behind his double eyeglass his eyes were keen ; his nose was a trifle thick and

slightly aquiline. His face, encircled by long gray whiskers, had the ruddy hue of a man accustomed to high living. He spoke French with a certain hesitation, and his nasal accent betrayed his American origin.

"Is it really M. Dorian, the artist, to whom I have the honor of speaking?" he inquired.

"It is myself, sir," replied Albert, motioning him to a seat. "What does this Yankee want of me?" he was thinking.

"Very well, sir, I have come about the affair *you know of*."

"Kindly excuse me," said the young man with some impatience, "I must set off on a journey within an hour, and I have not a moment to spare. What matter do you refer to?"

The only reply made by the stranger was to draw out an elegant pocketbook, from which he extracted an oval visiting card, blue on one side, red on the other, which he presented to Albert. It bore the following printed inscription: *Prefecture de Police. République Francaise. Garde de la Paix publique.*

For a moment Albert was amazed.

"What!" he exclaimed, "can you be—"

"M. Bistouri, at your service."

A fleeting expression of disappointment passed across the face of the young man.

"Are you not afraid," he said in a hesitating manner, "that the fatigues of this undertaking may be too great for your age? M. Jacob should have sent me a younger inspector."

"Oh, be easy," replied the other with a slight smile; "I am not on the superannuated list; I am hardly twenty-eight years old."

"Impossible, you are jesting."

"Not knowing whether you thought it advisable to explain the real object of this journey to your family, I thought it better to present myself in this guise, so as not to arouse suspicions."

"Then these wrinkles, this gray hair, these white whiskers——"

"Are false."

The artist could not get over his surprise. In spite of the prejudice still existing in certain circles against detectives, he took the hands of his new confederate and shook them cordially.

"That was something very like clairvoy-

ance on your part," he exclaimed. "Just fancy that I announced yesterday that a rich picture dealer was going to take me with him to London to see his gallery. You must play this personage. You call yourself——"

"Smith," suggested Bistouri, "and I live in Pall Mall."

"No, I said Regent Street."

"Never mind, it is close by."

"You will go to breakfast with us; we will take the express directly after coffee."

"With pleasure."

At table, Mr. Smith produced a reassuring effect upon Albert's parents. He gained their good will, even dazzled them, by his knowing remarks concerning the old masters and the modern ones, spoke with a certain pride, as became a good islander, of the influence exerted by the English school on our great colorists, Delacroix, Decamps, quoted the opinion of Géricault, and ended by astonishing the pupil of Gérôme, who could hardly believe his ears.

"Where on earth did he learn all that?" he wondered.

After dessert and the final embraces, the pair rolled away to the Western railway sta-

tion. Seven hours later they arrived in London and were driven to the Langham Hotel, not far from the spot where they were to begin their researches. They dined together and allowed themselves a good night's rest to mature their plan of operations.

When the detective entered Albert's room the next morning, the latter firmly believed himself in the presence of a stranger. In this man with the upturned nose of a dog on the alert, with thick, black, bushy hair, and the smooth-shaven face of a comic actor, he could not recognize the grave old gentleman with whom he had travelled the day before; even his voice was altogether different.

"Is this the *real* Bistouri that I have before my eyes?" asked he, with a smile that he could not conceal.

"Yes," said the inspector modestly.

"How does it happen that your nose turns up? Yesterday I thought it was aquiline."

"Naturally I have a nose like a trumpet. That is because my father was fond of music. Yesterday I put on my gentleman's nose; as you will see, it is not difficult."

And drawing from his pocket two short pieces of goose-quill, Bistouri placed them

carefully in either nostril. His olfactory organ resumed at once the appearance of the previous day, and his face seemed altogether different.

"You see," said he with his "American" voice, "that allows the air to pass through, and does not interfere with breathing. Now would you like a drinker's nose? Nothing easier."

He kneaded between his fingers a morsel of that modeling wax which sculptors employ for their first rude sketches, and applied it to the most prominent part of his visage, which immediately assumed the appearance of a false face, and began to sing a drinking song.

"Why are you in the police force?" asked Albert in amazement. "You would have made incredible sums on the stage!"

"I had a vocation to my business. But we will end the chapter of noses here; we have something better to do. While you order breakfast I will go scouting in the direction of Portland Terrace. Have it served in your room, and we will chat at table if I discover anything new."

Quarter of an hour later, in the uniform of

a messenger, with a package under his arm, Bistouri crossed the Regent Circus, went down Portland Street, and found himself on the field of operations. Not thinking it prudent to make inquiries at the house of Sir Roger, he questioned the shopkeepers of the neighborhood, got up a conversation with the butcher, made the letter-man and the baker talk, wormed things out of the grocer, and returned to the Langham Hotel perfectly sure of his ground.

"Sir Roger Lothbury is still living," said he to Albert, "but he has left London for his country-seat at Hastings, where the climate, which is as mild as that of Nice, is better adapted to his advanced age. The disappearance of Miss Ellena has never been cleared up. The Portland Terrace house is deserted. I think it would be well to strap our valises and take the express to the Sussex coast. Your travelling costume is just the thing, for Hastings, as you know, is a watering-place. If you like I will be your valet. We will start this evening."

"Why not at once?" asked the artist, who was boiling with impatience.

"Give me time to go to Scotland Yard.

I must make myself known to the English police, so as to be free to act. I have a letter of introduction."

"You are right," concluded Albert. "I approve in advance whatever you may do."

Hence our two indefatigable companions arrived the following morning at the old port of William the Conqueror, and hired at once a small house, conveniently furnished, near Gensing Station. Such an arrangement was far better than lodgings at any of the hotels, since it enabled them to avoid perpetual contact with indiscreet neighbors. They made an arrangement with a good woman of the neighborhood who for a fixed sum undertook the care of the house, the bedmaking and the washing. Under similar conditions the White Rock Hotel would furnish their meals ready dressed. Things being thus conveniently settled, they could set to work.

"I advise you to show yourself as little as possible in the vicinity of the Villa of the Lilies, where Sir Roger lives," recommended the inspector to his impatient companion. "The growth of your beard in the last three years has doubtless changed your appearance, but the particular circumstances under

which you were seen by those whom you suspect are of the kind which impress a countenance indelibly on the memory, and if Jack Raven or his wife meet you here, it will put them instantly on their guard. It would be much better to let me act alone in the first place."

Inactivity was contrary to Albert's disposition, but he had promised to follow all the counsels of the policeman. So he champed the bit impatiently in confinement, while awaiting the hour when he could play his part in this drama of justice and revenge. Bistouri spent the day in prowling around the dwelling of Ellena's grandfather, which had been pointed out to him.

It occupied a site near Warrior Square, at the spot where Hastings and St. Leonard's-on-Sea come together to form an interminable line of villas, beside the admirable beach which they look down upon from the height of an embankment as wide as one of our Paris boulevards. Its large garden, enclosed by walls, had the appearance and almost the dimensions of a park. The green shutters of the windows opening on the sea were hermetically closed, as if all the life of the inhabit-

ants was concentrated in the shade and mystery of this inaccessible garden. Even on that side, the small number of open windows showed that the Villa of the Lilies was far too spacious for the few inhabitants which it contained. Towards ten o'clock in the morning a butcher's boy and a porter bringing fish made their appearance with their wares. They were received by a neat young maid whose age and figure were not at all like the description of Annie Raven which the inspector had received from Albert. For a moment he was tempted to strike up an acquaintance with these purveyors, but he concluded it would be more prudent to do nothing until something new turned up, and with his hands in his pockets, and gaping at the sun, he strolled along the beach in search of an inspiration. How to enter this gloomy Castle of Silence! What plausible means could he devise to get a good look at the Ravens! Plainly, from housekeeper, Annie Raven had become a sort of lady companion. Never leaving her aged master, to whom she daily became more indispensable, she abandoned the care of the house to this young maid, and very seldom showed herself out of doors.

While he was making these reflections, a band of travelling German musicians installed themselves at a little distance and began playing the overture of Oberon with all their uncouth instruments. The repertory of these strolling artists was eclectic, and Bistouri was fond of music. Mingling with other promenaders he listened to the Kaiser march, the Bronze Horse, and the Postilion of Lonjumeau with signs of approval so marked that they attracted the attention of the clarionet player. When they stopped playing the musicians began to make a quest at the windows of the villas where the pretty faces of fair-haired children were visible.

Suddenly Bistouri clapped his hands to his forehead. The idea he was seeking had just germinated in his fertile brain.

As the player who had noticed him passed in front of him, Bistouri dropped a shilling in the cap with a red band which the German held out. Unaccustomed to such good luck, the man thanked him.

"You are a great artist!" exclaimed Bistouri, with enthusiasm.

"So!" said the other, delighted.

"The clarionet is the soul of the orchestra! I have myself a little skill as an amateur on that instrument, but I can't hold a candle to you!"

"So! I am happy to meet a comrade."

"What is your name, sir?"

"Schmidt."

"Mr. Schmidt, that is a fine cap you have there!"

"Oh!" said the musician artlessly, "I have a much finer one for Sunday."

"Since you have two, will you sell me this one?"

"What for?"

"What's the good of two caps when you have only one head? You must know that I am not merely a lover of music, but a great collector of caps. I will give you five shillings for yours."

"Bah!" said the honest German, "it is not worth half a crown."

"No matter, I value it more highly. Is it a bargain?"

"If that suits you, come and get it presently at the Union Jack tavern, where I shall dine with my comrades."

"Done! I will be there on the stroke of

noon, and we will drink the health of your great Wagner. What a man, my friend, what a genius!"

"That is a curious fellow!" mused the musician, as he rejoined his company.

At the hour named, Bistouri was at the rendezvous. He invited his new friend to dinner, stuffed himself with beef sausage washed down with strong ale, and returned home with his trophy wrapped in a newspaper, together with a second-hand flageolet which he bought from a dealer in bric-a-brac.

"What do you expect to do with that?" asked Albert, disdainfully, as he saw him complacently spreading out his purchases on his dressing table.

"*That?*" replied the inspector, "that is the pass-key which is going to let me into the Villa of Lilies; the talisman which will bring me face to face with our two adversaries, for I cannot act without knowing them. Will you kindly pass the modeling wax? I want to make nose number three."

With a turn of his hand he rouged his cheeks, plastered on his misshapen nose those pimples which betray an immoderate liking for strong drink, concealed his chin under a

short, sandy beard, and donned a lanky wig of dubious blonde.

"So much for the head," said he, when he had finished. "Now let us see about the costume. I must certainly have a comforter."

Albert, who was never tired of watching his metamorphoses, handed him a woollen Scotch plaid.

"It is too clean and too wide," protested Bistouri.

"We might cut off a strip," suggested the young man.

"Do! pillage your wardrobe. Besides, we scarcely have time to go shopping."

He tore the stuff and rubbed it on the hearthstone, to dirty it conscientiously. That result obtained, he wrapped it around his neck to conceal the absence of a shirt. Afterwards he put on an old brown coat, from which he tore two buttons to make its age more evident, donned the famous cap with the red band, and, really, the success of the disguise was extraordinary!

"Humph!" he grumbled in response to Albert's compliment, "there is a shadow in the picture. My shoes are too new, too ele-

gant. I am going to replace them by our excellent servant's old slippers."

This he did without delay, and then vouchsafed himself a smile of satisfaction.

"Everything is going finely," said he. "Expect me within an hour, and if I return without getting a look at the Ravens, it will be because the old boy protects them!"

Without hurrying himself, and with the flageolet under his arm, Bistouri descended the slope leading to the aristocratic quarter of the town.

It was the tea hour.

It may be affirmed that all England enjoys this collation at the same instant, with extraordinary punctuality. The noise of dishes being moved about resounded through every window. Not a soul was in the streets.

When he came in sight of the villa he was seeking, the inspector began to walk as if he were drunk, and seizing the knocker of the door, he let it fall with a crash that might be heard all through the house.

It was the young housemaid who came to answer the summons. Bistouri at once placed himself between her and the open door in such a way that she could not close it.

"What do you want?" asked the little maid.

"I am collecting for the Cherman band," replied the detective, holding out his cap.

"For the German band?"

"Ja wohl!"

"We do not give anything."

"So!"

"Get along with you!"

Far from obeying, Bistouri budged no more than a milestone. "You are ferry brittle, meess," said he, chucking her under the chin. The servant drew back a step.

Doubtless such a familiarity from a dirty clown was not at all to her taste, for she screamed with all her might:

"Mistress Raven!"

This was just what Bistouri had expected.

"What is the matter?" demanded a voice from the room at the end of the hall, where some one was taking tea.

"If you please, mistress, it is a villainous drunkard, who is holding the door open and won't go away."

Hasty steps glided across the matting. Annie Raven came forward, stiff and dignified.

She wore a very simple, but elegantly

made black dress. Her face, almost transparently pale, seemed long between the two bands of her hair, and her colorless mouth, habitually compressed, resembled the lid of a money-box. With severe eyes and an imperious air, she stopped in front of the pretended German, who looked her stupidly in the face.

"What does he want?" she asked, without even deigning to address him.

"A shilling for the Cherman band," growled the obstinate Bistouri, thrusting his cap under her nose, as if he supposed she might be going to sneeze up a silver piece. "*Der teufel*, ve don't blay vor the King of Brussia!"

"Ah! it was you who were deafening us with your trombones," said Sir Roger's housekeeper. "I forbid your playing here. We have an invalid in the house."

"That gosts more," declared the man with the flageolet. "That gosts half a grown."

"What!" cried the young servant, "a shilling for playing, and twice as much for keeping still! The man is drunk!"

"Fie! my briddy leetle meess," responded the imperturbable Bistouri, "unt if you vill

not pay, ve vill blay our noisiest dunes all tay long."

A cold glance from her superior checked the laugh on the lips of the pretty maid.

"Jack!" called Mistress Raven.

"What is all this racket about?" grumbled her husband, who now came forward, swallowing a piece of bread and butter.

"This man is trying to extort money from me by threats, and refuses to go away. Throw him out of doors."

"Get along with you, do you hear?" said the coachman, roughly.

The man with the flageolet tried to prolong the discussion so as to complete the mental notes he was taking. He began his refrain once more: "A shilling . . . Cherman band."

Jack Raven spluttered out a few oaths, apropos of these "furriners" who cannot stay in their own countries, but must come to eat the bread of other people, and with one turn of his hand knocked off the cap of the so-called "Cherman" and sent it flying ten feet away into the street.

"You are a brute!" said Bistouri.

"Good reason for being so! Since you

won't go, I am going to put you out myself." And with a master stroke full in the breast, he sent his adversary to rejoin the headgear with the red band.

"I'll pay you for that!" shouted Bistouri, as the door closed.

Our friend rubbed himself, dusted his coat, and returned to the house at Gensing Station completely satisfied. True, he had got a slight "wipe" from a British fist, but that was not paying too dear for an insight into the case, and he promised himself to return it with interest, later on.

"I see by your looks that you have been successful!" exclaimed Albert as soon as Bistouri entered.

"I have just been reviewing the whole staff of the villa," said the detective in a modest tone.

"Bistouri, you are a magician! Tell me about it!"

While cleaning himself, his companion described the foregoing scene.

"What do you think about it?" asked the artist.

"Reading faces is my trade," replied our hero. "The husband is merely a vulgar

brute, a simple instrument in the hands of his wife, but Annie Raven is terrible. She planned the whole affair. The others, every one of them, 'supes'! It will be a fight between us two. I shall have to redouble my prudence, for this time I have an opponent worthy of me."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRAP.

THE same evening, Bistouri, after replacing his false beard by a pair of short whiskers such as are worn by servants in good families, put on the waistcoat with striped wristbands and gilt buttons, and the chamois gaiters which completed his livery as Albert's valet, and went down once more towards the beach.

It was a splendid moonlight night, and the promenaders were taking the fresh air on the sands. While persistently smoking cigarettes, stretched out on a green bench, the inspector never took his eyes off the inhospitable door of that villa where he had been treated to such a rude rebuff.

Genius is patience, somebody has said. In his way Bistouri possessed genius. His long waiting was at last rewarded, for, towards nine o'clock, he saw the door he was watching

discreetly open for the exit of Jack Raven, who, with his shoulders covered with a short oilskin cloak, turned towards a point where several vessels were moored to the wharf.

Bistouri followed him, carelessly whistling a tune.

He saw him unmoor a shallop of the shape known as Norwegian, seize the oars and row in the direction of the jetty.

"Are these boats to let?" asked Bistouri of a man in whose charge they seemed to be.

"Yes," he replied, "I let them at sixpence an hour."

"Give me the lightest one."

"Take this one, sir. It is as good as its name, a regular sea-gull."

Bistouri jumped into the *Sea-Gull* and rowed into the offing in the direction taken by Jack, trying meantime to invent some plausible excuse for a chat. Gay pleasure boats, light sails, skimmed the surface of the waves. The tourists were availing themselves of this charming night to smell the salt breeze. Our boatman kept out of their way and gained as fast as possible on the heavy Norwegian occupied by Sir Roger's coachman. When he came within hearing distance,

he drew a pipe out of his pocket, filled it, and ejaculated in a tone of disappointment:

"Ah! stupid fool!"

Doubtless the other oarsman heard him, for he stopped rowing for an instant.

"Double beast! stupid! rattlehead!" shouted Bistouri.

"Are you blowing at me?" demanded the coachman in a surly tone.

"No, Mister. I was giving myself those delightful names. Imagine, I am a smoker, and I have forgotten my matches!"

"Come, you needn't cry over that. I have my box!"

"Oh, if you would kindly permit me to light my pipe I would be infinitely obliged. You know how it is; when one has bad habits he clings fast to them."

"Come nearer."

The two boats were soon alongside, and with every sign of gratitude Bistouri helped himself from the box held towards him by the other oarsman.

"A sail by night and a pipe of tobacco," said he, blowing blue wreaths of smoke into the air, "are the two great pleasures of my life. Look at that, how it is colored!"

He held out his meerschaum to Jack, who examined it like an expert.

"It is fine," said the coachman briefly.

"A present from my master. Ah! he is what you might call a generous man!"

Jack Raven had noticed Bistouri's new livery, and it had produced a favorable impression, for he felt that he was with a person of his own rank.

"You are in service," said he. "So am I; I am a coachman."

"And I a footman."

They rowed on side by side.

"What a magnificent stroke of the oars you have," resumed the detective, knowing very well that praise is the best way to win the good graces of fools. "What a broad back! What shoulders! You must be pretty solid, comrade!"

"I should think so," returned Jack with pride, "this very morning I knocked a German down with one blow of my fist."

At this poignant souvenir Bistouri repressed a grimace.

"You did well," said he, approvingly. "Those blockheads ought to be chased out of the country!"

"So!" went on the coachman, "your master leaves you at liberty to take such diversions as this?"

"I could say the same to you!" returned Bistouri.

"Oh!" said Jack, "mine is an old man, he does not go out four times a year. My horse and I have nothing to do. If I did not harness up the beast occasionally out of kindness, he would die, stifled in his own fat, like the ortolans."

"You must have a regular sinecure. So far as that goes, it must bore you."

The coachman repressed an energetic yawn.

"It bores me to death," said he. "The house is as gloomy as a funeral."

"What difference does it make," said Bistouri, "so long as one is well paid? Do you see this fine gold chain? My master gave me that. He treats me more like a friend than a servant."

This clever bait aroused a feeling of jealousy in Jack's dull mind. He replied rudely.

"Your master is not the only liberal one in the world! Mine has done more than that for *us*."

"How for *us*?" interrupted the detective, seeming not to comprehend.

"For my wife and me, then! My wife is his housekeeper."

"What has he done that is so extraordinary?" asked Bistouri, "has he perhaps made you his sole heirs?"

The other gave a start, and stared hard at him with a singular smile upon his lips.

"You have heard it mentioned?" muttered he.

"How could that be? Ten minutes ago I had not the honor of knowing you."

"Well, that is none of your business," said the coachman, dryly.

"Be easy! I am not jealous, and I can heartily rejoice in the good luck of a comrade."

Still chatting, they had gone round the jetty and were on their way back to the dock. Their little excursion lasted half an hour, during which the pretended footman displayed an acquaintance with horses which gained the esteem of the coachman. He talked about races, breaking-in, and proved that he knew how to drive as well as to row. Bistouri was an all-round man! Jack now

regarded him with a sort of respect. When they landed, the coachman wished to go back home, but his new friend clapped him familiarly on the shoulder.

"You did me a little service, just now," said he. "One good deed deserves another. Let us have a drink together."

"It is getting late; the Missus will scold."

"Bah! are not you the head of the family?"

"Yes, but when one's wife is a vixen—"

"A glass of grog will not detain you long."

Jack allowed himself to be drawn into a public house frequented by fishermen.

Bistouri ordered a bottle of the best rum, sugar, lemons, hot water, and two glasses. He intended to concoct the fragrant beverage himself, and did so as he did everything else, like an expert.

"To your health, to your success," said he, lifting his glass. "I am proud and happy to have made the acquaintance of so sympathetic a comrade."

"The same to you," replied the coachman, emptying his own, which the inspector hastened to refill.

The pipes were reloaded. The conversa-

tion took a new turn. Faithful to his tactics, Bistouri played the man of importance and gave himself patronizing airs. At the third glass of grog their familiarity increased, they waxed confidential.

"If you are not satisfied with your place," said the pretended valet, "I will recommend you to my master. He has every confidence in me and will take you if I say so."

"Humph!" said Jack, who was not to be outdone in bragging, "I think it more likely that you may enter my service. I am not destined to wear a livery forever. I have splendid expectations."

"Ah, yes," interrupted Bistouri in a mocking tone, "I recollect the kindness of your old master. A good joke, isn't it?"

"Nothing of the sort," protested the coachman, surprised at not being taken seriously, "nothing is more true. Sir Roger Lothbury has put us down in his will, before a notary."

"So you told me," murmured the detective with indifference.

"Don't you believe it?" asked Jack in a thick voice.

"It seems to me a good deal exaggerated."

"It is the exact truth, all the same. He

has no heirs. He is leaving us all his property except \$50,000 intended to found a refuge for young girls who have been abandoned, in memory of a young relative whom he lost. He is seventy-four years old; we shall not have to wait long. So, when the time comes, if you want a place, you may knock at my door."

"I don't say no."

The bottle was empty. Bistouri paid at the counter and offered his arm to the coachman, who needed a support. They parted not far from the Villa of the Lilies.

"When may I call on you in your own house?" asked the detective affectionately as they parted.

"Come to-morrow morning about eight," stammered Jack, "we will have a glass of white wine together. Come before the Missus is up, for she is not very accommodating, and does not like to make new acquaintances. We live like bears! Ring at the green door of the garden and I will open it."

"I had drunkard's luck!" thought Bistouri as he went to bed after this well-spent day. "To light upon a tippler! The business is altogether too easy with such people.

I do not like a game that is won in advance, it lacks the interest of the unforeseen. *Luckily*, Annie Raven seems to me a different sort from her booby of a husband. She will doubtless give me a lot of trouble."

Unnecessary to say that the next morning at eight, his hair well oiled and himself in his fine new livery, he rang softly at the door indicated by the coachman. According to promise it was opened by the latter, a brush in one hand and a chamois skin in the other.

"Morning!" said he, responding to the footman's vigorous shake-hands, "you find me furbishing up the harness. It gets mouldy in the saddle-room, and that's a pity. By the way, I was a little overcome, last evening. Your head is stronger than mine, comrade!"

"On the contrary," replied Bistouri boldly, "it was you who made me tipsy. When I got back to my room I could not remember a word we had been saying, except that you promised me a glass of white wine at eight o'clock."

"I will go and get a bottle," said Jack, "the wine cellar is close by. You will tell me the news," he added, clicking his tongue.

He moved off towards a vault closed by a solid oak door, opened it, and disappeared within.

Bistouri took advantage of this brief solitude to study the height of the garden walls. They were much lower on the side of the gardener's house, an absolutely deserted cottage, since nature had long been allowed to destroy what had been arranged by art; no parterres, no clumps of flowers, no smooth lawns were to be seen. A wild growth of virgin forest was springing up in all directions.

"A brigade of policemen might be hidden here without the inhabitants suspecting it," thought the detective.

As he was inspecting the windows, trying to discover which was the chamber of Sir Roger, a curtain was drawn up, and he beheld the arch and pretty face of the little maid. She appeared completely amazed to see a strange person strolling up and down quite as if he were at home, but our friend's natural face was far from alarming her like the phiz of the German musician who had been bold enough to pinch her chin the day before. On the contrary, her eyes lingered with a certain pleasure on this unexpected

visitor, and she nodded in return to his salute.

"Let us try to make a friend in the house," mused Bistouri. He gathered a wild rose and threw it with such skill that it fell into the housemaid's room through the half open shutters. This time she responded to his homage by the most gracious smile. The pantomime was interrupted by the arrival of Jack, carrying a venerable flask whose shape was hardly discernible under dust and cobwebs.

"Don't shake it!" advised the valet, drawing from his pocket a complicated knife of many blades and a corkscrew into the bargain. "Let me uncork it; that's part of my trade."

"It is old Rhine wine," grinned the coachman. "My master leaves it to the domestics. He drinks nothing but water and milk, and so does my wife; no one is left but me to empty the cellar."

"Pitiable fate! If you need an assistant, do not disturb yourself, I will be accommodating under the circumstances."

"Ah! ah! ah! you are a rum fellow!"

"To drink water when one has nectar like

this!" murmured Bistouri in ecstasy, after moistening his lips.

"Ah! the goods of this world do not always go where they should! You have nothing to complain of," joyously protested the pretended domestic. "What would your master say," he went on, "if he should take us by surprise?"

"He? He never leaves his apartment."

"A real paradise, eh? Oh, say, how do you call the little servant whom I see from here getting breakfast ready?"

The blonde maid had, in fact, appeared for a moment at the kitchen window, a freshly plucked rose in her corsage.

"Faith," said Jack, "she calls herself Mary, like all other servant girls."

"I think her very pretty. Has she got a sweetheart, do you know?"

"Not one. She is the daughter of an old soldier who lives up yonder on the coast. She never goes out except on Sundays to say her prayers in Trinity Church."

"What does she do here?"

"Cooks and makes the beds; she is clean and active. We are very well satisfied with her."

As is evident, Jack always expressed himself as if he were one of the proprietors of the villa.

"She would make a good housewife," concluded Bistouri. He was concluding this reflection, which was perhaps not wholly dictated by his desire to prolong the conversation, when he noticed that his companion suddenly looked frightened.

"What ails you?" he asked.

"There she is," muttered Jack in an undertone. "What made her get up so early to-day? Generally she does not leave her room until half past nine!"

Plainly, it was not the approach of Miss Mary which thus alarmed the coachman. It was not difficult for Bistouri to divine the cause. "Of whom are you speaking?" he inquired.

"Of my wife, of course! There is going to be a row; quick, hide yourself behind that clump of bushes. Look out if she gets a sight of you!"

The detective glided like a sylph under a curtain of leafage, and, to employ a common expression, it is certain that he had neither his eyes nor his ears in his pocket.

Annie Raven was in her dressing-gown. She advanced towards her husband with the silent, sinuous movement of a reptile. He had begun anew his polishing of the harness and was humming an air to put himself in countenance. She asked in her harsh voice:

"Did you go to the post-office yesterday as I advised you?"

"Yes," replied the coachman. "There was nothing for us."

"That surprises me. Are you sure you have not forgotten the cipher agreed on? You grow more and more stupid every day."

"Y, Z, 17—I recollect it very well," returned Jack in a surly tone. "And since you have come here to pick a quarrel, I advise you to put it off to some other time."

In the way in which these words were uttered there was a shade of unaccustomed rebellion—doubtless due to the invisible presence of Bistouri, before whom he was determined not to be tormented, which surprised and irritated the amiable dame.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, Jack," said she, "and remember that if you go too far, I have only to open my mouth to get rid of you once for all."

"Mind your own tongue," retorted Jack angrily, "our fates are bound up together for good as well as for evil. I can talk too. A word to the wise is sufficient."

More and more surprised by this revolt, Annie Raven looked about her for its cause and saw the morning refreshment spread out upon the little garden table.

"Are you drunk so early? A bottle! Why are there two glasses?"

"I put one for you, my dear," said the coachman blandly.

"Have done with your bad jokes. Whom were you drinking with? Mary, I suppose? I will show her the door."

"Annie, I assure you—"

"Ah! why did I marry this wretch?" cried the housekeeper, raising her pale eyes to the celestial vault. "And it was to assure him a fortune that I risked everything! that I pass my life in continual alarms lest it should be discovered!"

Her husband, dreading what she was going to say, put his heavy hand upon her mouth, a trifle rudely, perhaps:

"Hush! you wretch, I am not alone."

Divining what was about to follow, Bis-

touri in two or three strides that would have done credit to a red Indian, gained another clump of bushes beyond the reach of voices.

"You have brought some one in here?" stammered Annie, reddening to the roots of her hair for one of the few times in her life.

"Yes," replied her husband, hanging his head. "A servant in the neighborhood whose acquaintance I made. I invited him to have a drink of wine."

"Wine will get you hanged yet," hissed she in a tone that only he could hear. And, without awaiting his reply, and with a vivacity one would certainly not have expected from her sluggish temperament, she sprang through the shrubs and wild plants that intercepted her passage. Annie Raven heaved a sigh of satisfaction when she saw Bistouri lying on the grass twenty yards away, with a bunch of flowers in his hand.

"What are you doing here, sir?" she asked in an imperious tone.

"As you see, fair lady, I was gardening while waiting for you to rise," politely replied the pretended footman, making her a profound bow.

"This garden is not public. The master forbids any person being received here."

"I have no intention of setting up my tent in perpetuity. I merely came to ask a favor—your permission to talk for a moment with Miss Mary."

"Ah! then it is to Miss Grey that we owe your visit? Well, in a week's time you will have plenty of time to talk with her, for I am going to send her away."

"For pity's sake, madame, consider. She does not know me, she is ignorant of my motive for this proceeding, my intentions are honest."

"Must I call a policeman to put you out?"

"Don't trouble yourself. I decamp with pleasure, taking with me the delightful memory of your kindly reception."

Escorted by the inflexible housekeeper Bis-touri reached the door, but he was unwilling to depart without planting a seed of discord between the pair as a memento of his visit. Addressing himself to the coachman, who looked sheepish, he discharged at him this Parthian shaft:

"It is all right, old fellow! What you told

me yesterday is quite correct. Your wife *is* a harpy, a genuine harpy!"

Mrs. Raven shut the door in his face.

Once in the street, leaving the Raven family to adjust their domestic squabble, the inspector began to consider.

"We must act, and at once," murmured he; "the ground is getting hot. To the post-office in the first place."

On his way he said to himself: "There is poor Mary's future compromised by my chatter. Bah! That can be remedied in due time and place. The mistress will possibly be put out before the servant."

On reaching the office he presented himself at the wicket where letters were left till called for.

"Y, Z, 17," said he to the clerk. The latter looked through a good-sized bundle and gave him a missive.

"Come!" exclaimed Bistouri, starting on again towards Gensing Station, "chance is befriending us! If this had come yesterday, or if Jack Raven had come here this morning instead of stopping to have a drink with me, we might have had to wait for months until the next letter came."

Albert was striding up and down his little parlor, anxiously imagining a thousand good reasons to account for Bistouri's absence, when the latter came in brandishing the letter with an air of triumph.

"Well," he asked in anguish, "what news?"

"I know where Miss Morgan is," replied the inspector.

"Where?"

"At Lyons."

"Great Heavens! How did you find out?"

"Look at the stamp on this letter; it doubtless comes from the Davys, and it is addressed to Mrs. Raven."

The artist looked at the unopened letter and its mysterious address.

"How do you know?" he stammered. "It is not open. How did you get it? How did you have the patience to come back here before reading it?"

"I will answer only your last question, as being the most urgent. I waited because I need a razor to open it with. I do not know what it contains, it may be to our interest to close it up again and let it reach its destination."

"Profound man, you are always right!" cried Albert, rushing to fetch the object required. "Here, this is the sharpest one I have."

Bistouri raised as carefully as possible one of the flaps of the envelope, in such a way as to be able to refasten it with gum arabic, and drawing out the letter handed it to Albert.

"Read it yourself," said he, "read it aloud."

It ran as follows:

"LYONS, May 13, 1879.

"MY DEAR ANNIE:

"It is impossible for us to accept without reply the tart reproaches you address to us every month when sending your trifling order for three hundred francs, under the pretext that if we should receive a larger sum at any one time it would be wasted at once.

"What happened once in Paris will never occur again, for I have scolded Peter, and he has changed his ways, but you ought to understand thoroughly that we did not do *what you know of* merely to resign ourselves to spend our lives in working like hired servants.

"Your promise to divide up when the old gentleman ends a life which has lasted too

long already is all very well for the future, and, if need arises, you are aware that we know how to compel you to it, but that does not prevent the monthly three hundred francs from always being spent in advance.

"It is easy to preach economy to others when one lives in plenty one's self. You make us laugh when you pretend that you send us all your earnings and Jack's also. Do you not carry a high hand over everything? Is it not your business to regulate the household expenses? Do you not receive every week a considerable sum to be distributed among the refuges for deserted children? Don't be absurd, I know what's what, and you can't take me in.

"Miss E.'s health is always the same, thank God, but as she grows older she becomes more of a burden. If it were only on account of chattering neighbors she could not be left destitute of everything, and it costs more to live in France than it does in England. For all of these reasons we have concluded to buy a little beershop in the Guillotière quarter. We need five thousand francs to begin with. After that, we shall not bother you for awhile, but wait for something to happen.

"I expect an immediate reply, for Peter is growing more violent every day. He is quite out of patience and threatens to spoil everything. I cannot answer for him any longer. See what is the best you can do. Your very devoted

ETHEL.

"P. S.—We have changed our address. Send money to Impasse Vaudémont, No. 28."

Albert crumpled the paper with rage, but the inspector took it from him with an authoritative gesture.

"Are you mad, M. Dorian," said he coldly, "to destroy one of the most important documents in the case? That would be a pretty business!"

"I did lose my head, that's a fact," said the young man, ashamed of having yielded to this thoughtless impulse. "We will start for Lyons to-morrow to put these wretches in prison, and take possession of Miss Ellena."

"We shall do nothing of the sort."

"And who will prevent me?" demanded the artist haughtily.

"I will, if necessary. Consider, I have the right and the power to have even you arrested if I think it needful in the interests of that young girl."

In pronouncing these words the police agent was transfigured. Albert looked at him in consternation. He had before his eyes a new incarnation of this strange man: a terrible Bistouri, as cold and cutting as the surgical instrument designated by his sobriquet.* The young man wrung his hands in despair.

"Tell me what you mean to do," he entreated. "Ought we to leave Ellena in destitution, in the midst of these gallows-birds?"

"The person you mention," said the inspector steadily, "lost her reason in consequence of a frightful shock; she may recover it by a shock of an opposite kind, skilfully arranged. That is your affair, and I will give you my ideas about it. But in the interim, all violent emotions would simply make her worse, and an arrest, especially the arrest of a robust and desperate man, does not in the least resemble a scene from a pastoral drama. We will go to Lyons when she is alone, and bring her quietly back to her

*A bistoury is a peculiarly shaped knife, used by surgeons.

own country without giving her any shock. We will act afterwards."

"When she is alone? I do not comprehend you."

"Give me five hundred francs."

Albert drew a banknote from his pocket-book.

"There they are. What are you going to do?"

"Send them to the Davys."

"That is a little too much! Send money to those monsters!"

"We must give them the means to travel if we wish to separate them from your protégée. I am going to send it to them by telegraphic dispatch, with this message: 'Sir Lothbury dead. Come at once for the funeral, on the 17th, at ten in the morning. Jack will meet you at Dover, the 15th. Important; *come alone*. You know why. Annie.'"

"Meanwhile," continued Bistouri, "you can pack your valise. We will start for Dover, where I will *cull* them as they come off the boat."

With tears in his eyes, Albert threw his arms about him. "My friend," he mur-

mured, "I never loved anybody so much as you. You are an extraordinary man!"

"I know my little business, that's all," replied Bistouri, taking his hat to go to the telegraph office.

CHAPTER VII.

ELLENA.

BISTOURI's telegram was so worded that the Davys were left no option between the Dover and the Newhaven packetboat. In reading it they must necessarily conclude that their accomplices had important regulations to give them concerning their behavior at the funeral, which they might be unable to impart after they had reached the house, on account of the press of visitors and matters of that sort.

This clever scheme was entirely successful. The steamboat had scarcely stopped at the wharf and the gangplank been thrown across, than Bistouri, escorted by two detectives disguised as porters, went aboard and whispered a word to the captain, who bowed. Amidst the noise and confusion of the going ashore, the inspector pointed out to the young painter, who followed him like his shadow, a cou-

ple in deep mourning, who seemed even more anxious than the other passengers to land.

"No doubt those are the Davys," said he hastily. "I divine them by their appearance, their clothes, but as that name, probably false, was adopted by them only after going to the continent, it must not be pronounced; it would put them on their guard."

"Then how shall we accost them? We do not know their real name."

"Don't move, let me act."

In a few curt words Bistouri gave an order to the nearest of the porters. The man touched his cap, and addressing the traveller designated, who seemed to be looking for some one, he said:

"Is it you whom Mr. Jack Raven expects at dinner?"

"Yes," said the lady, who was next him; "why did he not come himself?"

"He seemed very tired. He is waiting for you at the Penton Hotel, just a step or two from here. If you will come with me——" And seizing a valise in each hand, the messenger walked ahead of the two travellers, who followed him arm in arm.

While they were reaching the middle of

the gangplank, so crowded that no escape was possible, persons who were doubtless in great haste trod on their heels and pushed against them, and suddenly, when he least expected it, the husband felt a cord like a bracelet go around his left wrist, which was hanging free. The thing was done quicker than lightning. In a flash the two ends of this cord, terminated by a double metal handle, were united in Bistouri's hand. It was the terrible *cabriolet* or *hand-compress*. with which an adult of ordinary strength could master Hercules in person and make him as obedient as a slave. At the same instant, the second detective took his place so close to the wife that she could not drop her husband's arm. With a scared look, the latter, divining confusedly that something was wrong, seemed trying to free himself. All the inspector had to do was to give the double handle a turn from right to left, and Davy, suppressing a groan of anguish, felt his legs knock against each other.

"Enough!" said he in a breathless voice. "Thanks! I will go with you."

"Be good, my lambs," replied Bistouri in a whisper, "don't make a show of yourselves

to these honest people who think you are of their own sort."

"What is the matter?" asked the woman.

"You are wanted."

At this formula, consecrated by custom in England, and of which she knew the meaning, the female prisoner's face became pale with terror.

"Then it was a trap!" she muttered, comprehending in her turn.

All this had passed so rapidly that the other passengers had not observed it. The two Davys, arm in arm, accompanied by friends and preceded by a porter with their baggage, seemed to be going towards the hotel. Those who passed them in the street did not even turn to look after them. To notice their indifferent gait, no one would have guessed that these two wretches were gasping under the inexorable hand of justice.

This sight, so new to Albert, turned him sick. Every member of the great human family beholds with sorrow the degradation of his equal. And yet, when he thought of the evil they had done to a poor innocent, in order to live in idleness and plenty at her expense, he became again inflexible.

On arriving at the police station the two prisoners were thrust without ceremony into different cells. Bistouri, still followed by his inseparable companion, went up the stairs leading to the office of the police commissioner four at a time.

"Did you get your prisoners?" asked the latter, who was waiting for him.

"Indeed I did. It seems to me imperative to question the woman before she recovers presence of mind. Unless I am very much mistaken, she will make a full confession."

"Bring her in."

A nervous attack came on the moment the accused found herself in the presence of a magistrate. While answering his questions she shed torrents of tears.

"Your name?"

"Ethel Fall."

"Your age?"

"Twenty-five."

"You are accused of burglary and abduction of a minor, committed at No. 37, Portland Terrace, London, during the night of Christmas, 1875."

"It is false."

"It is no use to deny it, we have all the information about that affair. The other guilty persons are in our hands, and they explicitly accuse you and your husband. Annie Raven and Jack, her husband, have spoken. Your victim is called Miss Ellena Morgan, granddaughter of Sir Roger Lothbury. Your ill-treatment has made her insane, and she is now at Lyons, Impasse Vaudémont. You see I could dispense with questioning you. It depends on yourself to gain the indulgence of your judges by a full confession of this crime and by aiding us to punish those who, I am willing to believe, induced you to assist them by their perfidious counsels."

"Nothing is truer than that!" cried Ethel Fall in the midst of her sobs. "Peter and I did it, but the real, the only guilty one is Annie, my sister-in-law. Ah! bad luck to me that I listened to her!"

And breathlessly she recited the facts:

Annie had conceived the plan and made ready for the attempt. Availing herself of her influence over Sir Roger, she had induced him to accept the invitation of an old friend who lived in a distant quarter of the city.

Afterwards she had put a little opium in Miss Ellena's coffee, with the result of making her feel unwell at the time when she was to have accompanied her grandfather. The old man wished to stay at home, but the housekeeper insisting that he needed some diversion, he went away in the carriage, persuaded that Miss Ellena was only slightly indisposed. After his departure the fog suddenly became very thick. Ethel, in men's clothes, was waiting in a cab which her husband had hired for the day, and which he drove himself.

To profit by the obscurity which favored their undertaking, they stopped the vehicle some twenty paces from Sir Roger's door, entered by means of a key with which Annie had provided them, blackened their faces in the kitchen, and invaded the drawing-room occupied by the two females. After a pretence at resistance, intended to conceal her complicity from the child, Annie allowed herself to be bound. Ethel kept the door. When Peter, her husband, tried to bind Miss Ellena, she struggled violently. He succeeded in throwing her down, and in forcing her to swallow part of the opiate prepared by Mrs. Raven for that purpose. Miss Morgan gave

a loud scream and fainted. Then it was that they wrapped her up in a brown woollen covering so as to take her away more easily.

Annie herself showed them where to find the gold, the banknotes, the silverware, after which Peter Fall gagged her. Part of the stolen objects were carried and placed in the cab. Everything was going on well, and they were getting ready to depart with their light burden, when a foreigner, a *Frenchman*, came to disturb them.

"It was I," interrupted Albert. "Do you recognize me?"

Ethel Fall looked at him a moment, dumfounded, then she answered, dropping her head, "Yes, sir, I recall you now, but when I saw you there, you had no beard."

Point by point she narrated the scenes with which the reader is familiar, and ended by protesting against the accusation of having ill-treated the young captive.

"It is not to bad treatment on our part that Miss Ellena's derangement is to be attributed," she declared with energy. "When she came to, in our little house in Tottenham Court Road, we saw at once, from her stupid look and strange actions, that

she was deranged. She recollected nothing. And we took good care never to say a single word in her presence which might remind her of the past. We lived all alone in a little house near that crowded street. Our furniture belonged to us, so we escaped the visits that are made to those who hire their things. After several months, when the affair ceased to be talked about, we went to France. Paris is an excellent hiding-place for those who wish to disappear. But for my part, I was always very gentle with Miss Ellena. I even took her part often against Peter, who now and then came in under the influence of wine, and whose temper at such times was not very agreeable."

"One word more," said Albert; "why did you take your victim away from the St. Anne Asylum after putting her into it?"

Ethel was stupefied.

"You know everything!" she cried. "Well, it was my husband who decided on that."

"With what end in view?"

"In Paris Peter wasted what came from the robbery. He played and lost it. In short.

we had to live on a pension from my sister-in-law. You cannot imagine how avaricious she is. It was through love of money that she brought us where we are, and if Sir Roger's whole immense fortune had fallen into her claws, she would have hidden every bit of it in her den. Peter thought she did not send us enough, and he was always threatening to bring Miss Morgan back to her grandfather. That was why he was bent on having her under his hand, so as to frighten Annie and make her 'sing.' "

"Be good enough to sign your deposition," said the commissioner to Ethel.

Then turning to a policeman whom he summoned by a stroke of his bell:

"Remove this woman," he added.

When she had gone, crushed under the weight of her shame, Albert began to speak:

"Sir," said he to the magistrate, "I appeal to your highest sentiments of humanity not to allow this arrest to become known. Give no reports to the journals. An active watchfulness might be kept up over the house the Ravens live in at Hastings, but it is indispensable at present to leave them in a false security. It is a question of the life of an old

man and the reason of a young girl. We start for Lyons to-night, and will bring back Miss Morgan from there with us, but first I am going to ask an interview with the attorney general at London, who will approve, I am sure, and who will write to you on the subject."

The commissioner smiled and nodded.

"Monsieur Dorian," he replied, "it is to your disinterested efforts above all that we owe this important capture. Whatever they may do, we have got the Ravens now. Thanks to you, they will not escape from us. Hence I willingly agree to your request, convinced that it is dictated by the generosity of your character."

Three hours later, Albert and Bistouri presented themselves before the Queen's attorney general, from whom they obtained all that they desired.

On leaving him, they scarcely took time to dine before jumping into a sleeping car.

"We will sleep on the road," said the inspector.

"All very well for you!" exclaimed the artist. "As for me, I forgot how to sleep a long time ago."

Both slept, nevertheless, in the train. Bistouri dreamed of a humble ivy-clad cottage on the Sussex coast. He saw at the back of a light and neatly arranged room a soldierly old man, who was reading near the window the *Army Monitor*. An old sabre, a worn uniform jacket hung on the wall. A fair-haired, smiling young woman who greatly resembled Miss Mary, moved from table to stove, stirring up the fire, laying three places. A gentleman whose features resembled those of a certain inspector as much as his reflection seen in a mirror assisted her in the kitchen. Finally the little housekeeper brought a smoking hot currant pie, the most odoriferous that ever left the hands of an English cook, and the shadowy old soldier said to the shadowy inspector:

“Come to table, sit down, my son-in-law.”

“Paris! everybody get out!” shouted rough voices.

His palate still having the flavor of the tart he had tasted in dreamland, Bistouri energetically rubbed his eyes.

“So soon!” said he crossly.

The two travellers breakfasted in the station and re-entered the car. They were at

Lyons the same evening. Their first business was to have themselves driven in a cab to the Impasse Vaudémont. Number 23 was a mean-looking little house. A lamp was burning behind the windows of the ground floor. Almost sinking with emotion, Albert rang the bell. A poorly-dressed old woman answered it, who gave a glance of surprise at the fashionably attired young man and murmured:

"The gentleman has doubtless mistaken the door."

"Miss Mor—Mademoiselle Davy—is she within?" asked the artist in a voice that trembled in spite of him.

"Do you wish to speak to Mlle. Louise?"

"To herself."

"But, monsieur, it is impossible!"

"Why?"

"Do you not know?" said the old woman, touching her forehead with her forefinger in a significant manner. "She could not understand you."

"We know her condition," interrupted Bistouri, "we must see her at once."

"I cannot allow it, gentlemen. I am in charge of her during the absence of her rela-

tives, and they expressly forbade me to allow any one to enter."

"By order of the Paris prefecture of police," said Bistouri, exhibiting his card as inspector. This talisman produced its usual effect.

"Since that is so, my good gentlemen, be kind enough to follow me," murmured the guardian, who had the honest face of a woman of the people. She added:

"*Mon Dieu!* What can the poor child have done to be put in prison?"

"There is no question of putting her in prison," explained the artist. "On the contrary, we bring her good news. Her fate is about to change completely."

"Good news? Ah! so much the better. You frightened me, especially monsieur with his surly air," said the old woman, pointing at Bistouri. "What a pity that the relatives of Mam'selle Louise are absent; they would be so pleased!"

While exchanging these words, the three had entered the first room on the ground floor, of which Albert's eyes took in every detail. A round table bearing a Carcel lamp, four common chairs, a Voltaire armchair,

across which was thrown an unfinished piece of needlework, and a mahogany bureau, composed its entire furniture. The chimney-piece, adorned with a mirror, supported a small clock flanked by china vases containing artificial flowers.

"Mam'selle Louise is there, in her room," resumed the woman, pointing to a door at the other end.

"Do not call her yet," said Bistouri, who made a sign to his companion. "Let us sit down and chat a little."

The old woman dusted the velvet of the armchair with her apron and offered it to Albert, for whom she seemed to entertain a special preference. When she likewise sat down near Bistouri, the latter said, looking her straight in the face with his scrutinizing eyes:

"What is your name, madame?"

"Madeleine Duroc."

"Have you any family here?"

"I am a widow, but I have a son who is a weaver. Why do you ask?"

"I am going to explain to you. How long have you known M. and Mme. Davy?"

"Scarcely a month, for they have not

been here long ; they lived in another part of the city. As a neighbor, I became interested in their poor young lady, so pretty and so unfortunate. I promised to look after her and to sleep in the house during their absence, which will not be long. They seemed very much pleased when they bade me good-by, and said they were going to gain hundreds and thousands. Is that the good news?" .

"Listen to me, Madame Duroc ; no offence intended, but you do not seem to be in very good circumstances. Probably some honestly earned banknotes might be of use to you. I am going to make you an offer. Mlle. Davy is already accustomed to your company. She probably listens with docility to what you tell her?"

"She is a real little lamb of the good God."

Albert divined the inspector's plan.

"We came to find her and take her to Paris," said he in his turn. "We are the best friends she has on earth, although she cannot recognize us, poor little thing! The sight of two strangers may disturb her, and at any cost we wish to avoid all emotions that might be dangerous on account of her mental condition. Will you manage that by going

with us for a few days only? I will repay your devotion."

"But gentlemen," stammered Madame Duroc, embarrassed by this unexpected offer, "I do not know what to answer. There is a responsibility towards her relatives."

"Those whom you call such will never return. They are under lock and key. Mlle. Louise has no relative but a millionaire grandfather, from whom they abducted her, you can guess for what purpose, and to whom we are going to return her."

"It is more wonderful than a story in a newspaper, what you are telling me," exclaimed the amazed old woman. "If your face were not so frank and honest I would think you wanted to play a trick on me."

"You must be the chaperon, the guardian, of the poor insane girl," insisted Albert. "You must remain constantly with her and not leave her until you have put her into the hands of my own mother. I offer you three hundred francs for your trouble. Will you take it?"

"Under those conditions I would have accepted less than that," said Mme. Duroc, "but since you are so generous it is not for

me to protest. Would you like to see her?" she added.

"Of course," replied the inspector, for his companion was too deeply affected to say a word.

Mme. Duroc softly opened the door at the back, and for the first time since that terrible Christmas night Albert was able to contemplate with mingled sympathy and admiration her whom he had never since forgotten.

Sitting on a large wicker chair, leaning slightly forward, her elbows on her knees, her chin resting on her clasped hands, the young girl was perfectly still. Her eyes, unusually large, were looking into nothingness. One might have thought her a Statue of Silence or of Stupor, a soulless, senseless marble image. When the door opened she did not move, but retained her meditative attitude.

"She does not seem to see us," whispered Bistouri. "What is she dreaming of?"

"Of nothing," answered the old woman. "She is always like this when she is left alone."

Then, speaking to the lunatic in a loud voice:

"Mam'selle Louise, here are two gentlemen, two friends who have come to see you."

The young girl slowly rose, looked at the visitors with indifference, and dropped an automatic curtsy.

"Miss Ellena Morgan," said the artist, pronouncing the syllables distinctly.

At this name, which had not struck her ears within three years, the poor girl started. She turned towards Albert with a vague smile, her forehead contracted as if she were seeking something in her memory, and then, with a discouraged motion of the head she fell back into listlessness.

"We are going to dress you, to make you look pretty," went on her guardian, talking to her in the coaxing tone used to persuade children. "We are going away with these gentlemen, who are your friends. We are going to Paris. You will live in a fine house, with mirrors all over, and carpets, and servants. I shall be there, close by you."

"I am willing," replied Ellena passively.

Albert could not weary of admiring this angel with broken wings. Would the mind ever return to reign over that pure forehead? Would the light of intelligence again illum-

nate those large eyes full of dormant mystery?

However, he would not prolong this first interview—it was much too painful. He drew Mme. Duroc aside and said in an undertone:

“As early as possible to-morrow I will send some one here to try on travelling apparel for you and Mlle. Louise, as you call her. Select whatever is necessary, and get your trunks packed. We shall start directly after breakfast.”

“At your service,” said the old woman, curtsying.

“Miss Morgan,” said the young man respectfully, “I bid you good night. We will come back to see you to-morrow. Will you give me your hand?”

She looked at him without surprise, and extended her transparent hand, but she did not speak.

“Come away,” advised Bistouri. “She is not accustomed to our faces, and we must not fatigue her.”

The two went to a large linen draper’s shop and left orders before returning to the hotel, where they slept very badly, albeit the elas-

ticity of their mattresses left nothing to be desired. Albert counted the hours. At midnight he was seized with a wild desire to go and stand guard in the Impasse Vaudémont to make sure that nothing unusual occurred. He was afraid lest his treasure should be stolen.

Towards ten o'clock the next morning, when they made their appearance at the house in which Miss Morgan lived, they found the two women ready to depart. Ellena wore with perfect ease a travelling costume, whose admirable fit set off the natural elegance of her figure. Dame Madeleine had had the good taste to select for herself the simplest garment, suitable to her age, and her new position. Albert paid the dressmaker, put everybody into a carriage (which did not fail to attract the attention of the neighbors), and they lunched at a hotel near the station, the four travellers afterward setting off for Paris in a private compartment.

During the repast Albert had closely observed Miss Morgan, without seeming to do so, but not without a certain anxiety. But she conducted herself at table, as she did everywhere else, with the ease that bespeaks

an excellent education, and, as was said by the director of St. Anne's, nothing in her outward actions betrayed the state of her mind.

She drank nothing but water, following a habit implanted in infancy, ate very little, and had herself waited on like a woman accustomed to the attentions of servants. Her silence was all that appeared singular, and that a stranger might attribute to a reserved disposition. As far as the multiplied cares of material life were concerned, there seemed to be nothing amiss with her.

The sequence of her thoughts once rudely interrupted by the frightful shock received in Portland Terrace on an accursed night, the body had continued to act automatically in obedience to habits formerly acquired. Her semi-unconsciousness had protected her against the examples of those around her. The vulgar manners of the Falls, the grossness of the lunatics amongst whom she had spent a year, had not even touched her. As nettles cannot impair the whiteness of a lily, so this promiscuity had left intact her training as a woman of the higher social circle.

When the train had got up steam and de-

parted, Albert took a seat beside her, and began talking in English, carefully noting the effect of his words. The very first he uttered made her start, as she had done the previous evening on hearing her real name, and from that moment she replied to him in the same language. There was something plaintive and gentle in the sound of her voice, and her answers were brief and simple. She never asked a question, but limited herself to approving and thanking him for the numberless trifling attentions of which she was the object. She had no memory except for the events of the day, forgotten on the morrow. She seemed to experience neither pleasure nor annoyance, nor to see anything to which Albert did not specially call her attention, and even these she regarded with a certain lassitude.

If anything he said was beyond her comprehension, she gave him a timid, inquiring glance, and then lowered her eyes and was silent. Nevertheless, of her three companions it was he whom she seemed to prefer, so much so that Madame Duroc said to him, smiling:

“My employment has become a sinecure;

you have tamed her at once. I never saw her talk so much to any other person."

Alas! thought the artist, it is the soul of a child in the body of a woman. Will the future give me the happiness of seeing this benumbed heart awake once more to the joys and affections of life?

Bistouri, who read this question in his eyes, reassured him as best he could. He spoke of what he called "the return shock," the details of which he was already arranging in his mind, and upon whose results he placed great hopes. But his companion, though approving the project and bent upon assisting it to the utmost, dared not open his heart to hope, lest the disillusion should prove too painful to endure.

On arriving at Paris, the young man placed the ladies under the care of the faithful inspector, while he hastened home to apprise his parents of this unexpected visit. One can imagine the exclamations of the excellent couple when he announced while embracing them that he came to "ask hospitality in the name of the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood." He was obliged to explain, to recount in minute detail, the events we have

described. At every word Madame Dorian fell into ecstasies of fright; she shuddered as she thought that her son had incurred the hatred of these arrant villains, two of whom were still at liberty and might make him pay dearly for his interference in their affairs.

M. Dorian, on the contrary, unreservedly admired the resolute conduct of Albert and the manner in which he had avenged the accusations brought against him before the magistrate by the real culprits.

"Bravo, Albert!" he cried, "you have behaved like a man of courage, and I am proud of you."

"All my efforts would have been in vain," said the young artist modestly, "if I had not had the most intelligent and untiring of friends to assist me. Without him, without the brave Bistouri, Miss Ellena would not have been recovered, and the greedy claws of Annie Raven would have kept forever the fortune which belongs to her."

"What a joy," exclaimed Mme. Dorian, "what a happiness to see so touching a victim restored to her only relative, to her own home, her own circle, and thanks to you, my son!"

She had placed her two hands on her son's shoulders, and was looking at him with admiration.

"There is one thing dearer than fortune, a thing I fear it is impossible to restore to her," murmured he in a mournful tone; "it is her reason!"

"Poor child," sighed the father, "of what use is this change in her destiny if she cannot comprehend its nature?"

"We should pity her all the more for that reason," exclaimed Albert. "I cannot stop until this work of reparation is completed. I rely on you, dear mother, to act as her chaperon to Hastings. Treat her as your own daughter, and if the poor deranged girl cannot thank you, at least Sir Roger and those who are attached to Miss Ellena, will bless you."

In their impatience to see the heroine of these dramatic adventures M. and Mme. Dorian offered to accompany Albert to the hotel where Bistouri was awaiting the result of the negotiations. They greeted the inspector cordially and congratulated him on the result obtained by his pertinacity.

"Patience," said Bistouri, "our task is

not ended yet. The most difficult part of it is still to be done!"

Mme. Dorian embraced Miss Morgan, who in return displayed all the sympathy of which she was capable. She was installed in her new family by adoption, in the Rue St. Honoré, where Mme. Duroc remained with her a few days before returning to Lyons.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE BLACK MEN!"

WHILE Miss Morgan, obeying the laws of habit, was gradually becoming accustomed to Albert and his mother, Bistouri had returned to Hastings, where he busied himself in furnishing the rooms intended for the two ladies in the house at Gensing Station. When all was ready he telegraphed to Paris. The next day, after a pleasant passage across the Channel, the young artist welcomed his mother and Ellena under his own roof.

Constantly on the alert, he was watching for the first gleam of reason in the eyes of his protégée. Thus far no sign of it had come to raise his hopes. The sight of her own country had not aroused the poor lunatic from her torpid indifference. The only sentiment she seemed to experience was a sort of satisfaction at finding herself near Albert, and still more his mother, whom she styled "good friend."

As the time fixed for the supreme experiment drew near, the young man found his doubts and anxieties increase. He was about to play his last stake, and upon that depended (as he inwardly avowed) the happiness of his life. His mother, who read his thoughts, was likewise tormented by uneasiness. Bistouri alone, like a captain on the bridge of his vessel at the moment of ordering the attack, was in full possession of himself. He gave his orders and watched over every detail.

Mme. Dorian, whom he had taken into confidence concerning his scheme, and who, like all mothers, trembled lest her child should incur any danger, had insisted on making sure of Jack and Annie Raven before anything else was done.

"My presentiments never deceive me," she said repeatedly. "Believe me, we are threatened with a great danger."

"To arrest the Ravens just now would be simple folly," replied the inspector. "Do not forget that Ellena is ignorant of their guilt. She knew them from infancy, and for her theirs will be the friendly and familiar faces that we need."

"God grant you may not repent of not fol-

lowing my advice," murmured the mother, pensively.

At last, on the morning of the day chosen by Bistouri, all preliminary measures having been taken, Albert gave his arm to Miss Morgan, whose face was concealed by a heavy veil, and knocked at the door of the Villa of the Lilies.

This time it was Annie who opened it.

"Can I see Sir Roger Lothbury?" inquired the young man.

"Sir Roger is in poor health; he does not see callers," replied the housekeeper dryly.

"Kindly hand him this card, and tell him the business is urgent," said Albert, presenting at the same time the card of a member of the House of Lords, whose name must open all doors. Annie read it at a glance, and dared not refuse entrance to persons of such importance.

"Come in," said she, "I will go and tell Sir Lothbury." And she introduced them into a large drawing-room on the first floor.

"Excuse me if I make you wait a little," she said, as she was about to leave the room to fulfil her errand. "My master rises late. He is just dressing."

"You might remove your veil, Miss Morgan," said Albert in a trembling voice as soon as she disappeared.

Ellena obeyed and looked around her, her companion meanwhile drawing back a few steps, in order to leave her at liberty and observe her movements from a distance.

The vast room in which they found themselves was one in which the old man had piously collected all his remaining souvenirs of her whom he believed he had lost forever. The hangings, the furniture, the pictures, occupied the same places as of old in the apartment of the young girl; the music books, the albums were arranged in their former positions. And it was here that Sir Roger loved to meditate on his memories of the past.

Ellena's eyes roved for a long time from one object to another, dwelling upon each with an attention which Albert had never before seen manifested on her countenance. A strange transformation was taking place in her. For an instant she seemed overwhelmed; then she suddenly pressed her hands against her forehead, covering her eyes as if to concentrate her thoughts, and then she walked slowly towards a portrait,

the frame of which was adorned with a branch of yellowing box, and murmured:

"My mother!"

Albert was as pale as a ghost. He scarcely dared to breathe, lest he should disturb her.

The young girl took off her hat as she must have been accustomed to do on returning from a walk. It was the first spontaneous action her friend had seen her perform since he recovered her.

She threw the hat down on a piece of furniture unhesitatingly, as one does when at home, and turned over the leaves of some music books. A smile which gave hope to her silent companion flitted across her lips, a smile in which thought returned, like a plaintive ghost to a deserted house. Having found the page for which she was probably looking, Ellena sat down at the piano which had been left open. Her transparent hands ran up and down the keyboard, and she began playing a delightful nocturne by Chopin with bewildering facility. Her soul hovered above the keys. She seemed so absorbed that the noise of a door turning on its hinges did not make her turn her head.

Sir Roger entered, leaning upon Annie.

Albert pressed both hands against his heart, expecting an explosion.

The old man seemed walking in a dream. The leaf of the door still concealed Ellena from his view.

"Oh! that air, that air of the old times!" he murmured. "Who is playing it?"

He came forward trembling and perceived his grandchild.

Without surprise, as if the four years that had elapsed were merely the bad dream of a single night, Ellena stopped playing, rose, and offered her forehead to her grandfather.

"Good day, grandfather," said she in a soft voice.

Sir Roger's eyes dilated, he uttered an inarticulate cry, and sank into the arms of Annie and Albert, who carried him to his armchair. On beholding this singular scene, a long shudder ran through the body of the young girl.

"O my good Annie," she cried in terror, "THE BLACK MEN, THE BLACK MEN!"

The broken chain of her memories had just been reunited, her ideas co-ordinated. With one flight her mind retraced the interrupted sequence of the past.

Overwhelmed by surprise and terror, the housekeeper had finally recognized both her young mistress and Albert. She ran out of the room and stumbled against Jack Raven, who was coming along the hall, attracted by the unusual noise.

"What has happened?" he demanded.

"We are ruined," said she in a breathless voice. "Ellena is here, brought by the Frenchman!"

"Curse it!"

"Ethel and Peter have betrayed us!"

"Not surprising; they were always threatening you with it. All we can do is to get out of the way."

The head of the coachman appeared for an instant behind the door, spying what was going on in the room.

"She is right," growled he. "They have played us a trick. I'll have time enough to line my pockets and get off through the garden."

Without concerning himself about his accomplice any more than if she had never existed, the villain ran to his room, slipped several rolls of gold coin into his vest along with a revolver, and passing through the

saddle-room disappeared under the garden trees.

Annie had summoned all her coolness to face the storm. Before following the example of her husband she wished to find out exactly what the situation was. After all, Miss Morgan had spoken to her affectionately. Nothing proved that she knew anything about her misdeeds. Unless, indeed, she was playing a part agreed on beforehand. That was what remained to be found out.

The housekeeper took a tray from the dining-room sideboard and placing on it a carafe of water, a napkin, a glass and a sugar bowl, she went towards the drawing-room, composing her features as best she might.

Foreseeing some emergency, Albert had provided himself with a strong cordial, so as not to be obliged to accept anything at the hands of Mrs. Raven. While Ellena supported the old man's head, he poured a few drops between his lips, and presently a faint color reappeared on his pale cheeks. The first name he stammered, like the cry of a deserted child, was that of his evil genius:

"Annie! come to me!"

Then, opening his eyes, he perceived the charming heads of Albert and Ellena, bending over him so closely that they nearly touched, and anxiously watching for consciousness to return. Making a sudden effort to rise, and throwing his arms about his grandchild's neck, he drew her close to his breast, and their tears flowed together.

This relaxation of the nerves was the best thing that could have happened to either. A dew of tears refreshed their feverish foreheads and quieted the irregular throbbings of their reunited hearts. They exchanged caressing words. Ellena's voice seemed utterly changed. In that rich and velvety tone which musicians call contralto, she murmured:

"Oh! grandfather, how long have I been away from you? Why have I not seen you every day?"

He answered:

"I will not die yet, since you are here! Tell me, Ellena, what became of you after our separation?"

"I do not know. It seems to me as if I had lived in other places besides this room, with people who spoke another language,

dreadful people who were always quarreling; in places where I was hungry and cold."

Albert felt the intoxication of triumph. The "shock in return" had succeeded, the beautiful statue had recovered her soul!

"You dreamed all that, but now you are awake. Do not think about it any more," he said gently.

At the sound of that voice the young girl started as if she had just become aware of his presence, and stared at him fixedly for several seconds.

A new anguish constricted the heart of the artist. Would she recognize him? Would his features also be drowned in oblivion with those of the persons among whom had been spent the interval of her derangement?

He waited anxiously.

A wrinkle had furrowed Ellena's forehead. He knew it well. It indicated in her a mental effort to remember, to comprehend. At last it vanished; her eyes lost their questioning expression; memory had responded!

A gentle smile lighted up the young girl's features, and she held out her hand to her protector.

"My friend," she murmured. And this

word from her pure lips was the reward of four years of faithful efforts to save her.

In his turn the old man examined Albert for the first time since he came into the house. He recognized him without difficulty.

"You are M. Dorian," he said in a feeble voice, "the man whom I wrongfully accused in my despair, and who has so victoriously proved his innocence. Will you ever forgive me? And it is you," he went on, pressing the young man's hands, "it is you who bring her back to me. God bless you!"

"At the time of our interview before the magistrate," returned Albert, "I took a solemn vow in your presence. I swore never to rest until I had discovered the criminals and found Miss Morgan if she were living."

The young girl seemed to be hanging on his lips, so attentively did she listen to these perplexing words.

"You have avenged yourself like the just, by returning good for evil," stammered Sir Roger. "Tell me how you were able to find my child, that I may know how deeply I am indebted to you."

As he was finishing this question, the rigid face of Annie Raven approached the group

formed by the two young people kneeling on the carpet beside Sir Roger's armchair.

She took in the situation at a glance.

"Did the gentleman call me?" she asked, presenting the tray with refreshments.

Such audacity confounded the Frenchman. He could not contain his indignation.

"Leave the room, madame," he exclaimed, "Miss Morgan and I have had too much of your drinks already!"

The significant tone in which he gave this order left not the shadow of a doubt in Annie's mind. It was an evident allusion to the narcotic she had prepared in Portland Terrace. Her past was clearly known.

She looked entreatingly at her old master, who turned away his eyes. Then, having nothing more to rely on, feeling the earth give way beneath her feet, the wretched woman fled into the corridors, and wandered up and down like a hunted deer, not knowing what decision to come to. For an instant it occurred to her to take poison, but she clung to life, she clung especially to the stolen riches concealed in a hiding-place known only to herself.

"You spoke very severely to Mrs. Raven,"

said the old man, recovering from his surprise. "What has she done to you?"

"This woman in whom you had such blind confidence, coveted your fortune," said Albert in a steady voice. "She was the soul of the plot for the disappearance of Miss Morgan, your direct heir, from the land of the living."

At this terrible declaration the old man once more became deadly pale. With a jerk he tore off the buttons of his shirt and opened it, as if he was stifling.

"'Tis too much joy, too much suffering for one day," said he. "I cannot bear it. Take me to my bed in my own room. I cannot stand upright."

The artist lifted him as if he were a child and carried him into the next room, where he laid him on a couch.

"Call my doctor," groaned Sir Roger, "Dr. Williams. He lives in Warrior Square. Be quick!"

"What has become of Bistouri?" thought the frightened artist. "Why does he leave me alone at such a moment?"

In fact the pretty servant, Mary, was not to be found. Mrs. Raven had doubtless carried out her threat and dismissed her. Albert

hesitated to leave Ellena and her grandfather exposed to the violence of the housekeeper, who, having nothing further to conceal, might proceed to extremities. He returned to the drawing-room repeating:

"Where is Bistouri?"

But as soon as he entered the room where he had left the young girl, he saw her half fainting and ready to fall. The "return shock" had been too violent for her strength. Albert ran to support her.

"Lean on my arm, poor child," said he. "Sir Roger is feeling better, much better. One does not die of joy!"

He led her to a window overlooking the garden, to give her a breath of fresh air. Surrounded by climbing vines, this bay formed a poetic frame for the charming faces of the young man and his companion, whose languid head rested on his shoulder. A prey to the keenest anxieties, the eyes of the latter scrutinized the clumps of greenery where he seemed to hear the sound of voices—the noise of an approaching struggle. Presently Bistouri's well-known accents reached him. Doubtless the final scene of the drama was being enacted behind the curtain of shrub-

bery which concealed it from his view. For an instant the artist remained with his eyes fixed, his ears intent, forgetting Ellena standing at his side.

Suddenly a report was heard.

The young girl uttered a feeble cry, and he felt her body grow heavier on his arm.

Albert had scarcely time to clasp her more closely to prevent her falling, when blood spurted in a stream from her corsage.

This is what had happened:

CHAPTER IX.

DOG AND WOLF.

URGED by the imminence of the danger, seeming already to feel irons on his ankles, Jack Raven had rushed into the garden, where he hid himself like a wild boar in ambush. He could be tracked by the trodden plants, the broken flowers, which he left behind him. With one spring he rushed at the green door through which the pretended valet, Bistouri, had entered a few days before. Of this the coachman always carried the key. He hastened to open it, and was already preparing to run out when the sight of a massive form standing about five feet away, stopped him short.

"The police!" muttered he, suppressing an oath, "I am nipped in the trap!"

Jack quickly refastened the door, and without stopping to take breath, hid once more in the bushes.

"There is another entry near the garden-er's cottage," thought the rogue. "Bah! they haven't got me yet!"

He went to this other door, opened it with precaution, and closed it at once with a cry of rage. Like the other, it was guarded by a sentinel.

"The house is watched!" he exclaimed. "What's to be done?"

One more chance remained. Jack was robust; he had confidence in the swiftness of his legs. The English policeman, redoubtable in a hand-to-hand struggle, is not a good runner. Therefore he might climb the wall, sufficiently low at this point, jump into the street as far as possible from the sentinel, and scud quickly to the harbor. If he succeeded in gaining his boat, moored near the jetty, he had only to row into the open sea and go ashore further away, in one of the little ports along the Sussex coast.

He had gold! That meant safety!

A strong growth of ivy climbed up the whole length of the wall, the stones of which, detached here and there, left open spaces in the masonry. Aiding himself by this natural stepladder, the wretch was already

half way up, when he felt himself seized by one leg.

His heart contracting with anguish, he tried a few kicks intended to make the person who had apprehended him in this singular fashion relax his hold, but the other pulled with all his might, and the weight of the two bodies was too great for the plants which supported them. They gave way with a crack.

Jack rolled on the grass.

With one bound he was on his feet again and on the defensive, ready for anything. He was about to fall on his antagonist, when he stopped, his mouth wide open. He had just recognized the footman who got him such a rowing from his wife a fortnight earlier.

"Ah! it is you again," he said in a suppressed voice. "What do you want of me?"

"Then you promenaded on the walls, like the somnambulist, eh?" replied Bistouri good-naturedly. "How have you been since I had the honor to see you last?"

As he said these words, he made a movement as if to approach nearer, but Jack jumped back.

"Come no further!" he cried in a savage

tone, "come no further, or it will be the worse for you!"

Both on their guard, they eyed each other like dog and wolf.

"Come, *shake hands*," said Bistouri ironically; "it always pleases me to grasp an honest hand."

Jack Raven ground his teeth.

"*You are one of them!*" he growled, "I might have guessed it."

"Every one to his little trade," replied the inspector. "*I am one of them, and I arrest you!*"

He collared the desperate man, but his strength doubled by danger, Jack repulsed his adversary and sprang towards the saddle-room, with the instinctive idea of barricading himself there.

Bistouri rushed after him. He was about to seize him, when the other drew out a revolver.

"One step further and this little bird will sing," he grinned.

In spite of his professional courage, the police agent hesitated for a moment. Jack looked despairingly on every side, seeking a plank of safety. It was then that he caught

sight of Albert at the window with Miss Morgan.

"So there he is!" he muttered with hatred, "the fellow who has ruined us!"

And without taking time to aim, he discharged his weapon at the window, shouting at the top of his lungs:

"That is for you, confounded Frenchman!"

It was Ellena who fell.

Bistouri had sprung forward too late to prevent this desperate deed. He seized the murderer from behind, put his knee in the small of his back, and succeeded in disarming him.

"So prison is not enough for you?" he cried, "you must needs have the gallows?"

He laid the muzzle of the pistol against his breast, thinking this threat would paralyze him.

"Why don't you fire?" yelled Jack with defiance. Fearing to yield to the temptation, Bistouri threw the pistol as far as he could.

"When I have a bundle to deliver," he said coolly, "I don't like to spoil the goods."

Attracted by the report, the policemen had run to his assistance. They bound the pris-

oner and laid him at the foot of a tree, under guard.

During this time, Albert, half mad with grief, had carried the fainting Ellena to a sofa and examined her wound. The ball was embedded in the flesh at the spring of the neck. Blood was issuing from the wound. The young man felt that his own life was escaping through it as well as that of the injured girl. Had he found her only to lose her at once?

“And nobody in this cursèd house, nobody but a feeble old man to give assistance!”

Albert felt his mind wander. Suddenly he remembered the words of Sir Roger: “Dr. Williams lives in Warrior Square.”

Minutes were worth centuries; it was necessary to run thither without delay.

He folded his handkerchief in square, poured on it the rest of the cordial remaining in the flask he had brought with him, drew the improvised bandage close over the wound to stop the hemorrhage until the physician should arrive, and then rushing out of the house like one demented, he went as fast as his legs could carry him in the direction of Warrior Square.

Miss Morgan remained alone, under the care of God.

Not a sound in this mortuary chamber. Only the clock ticked softly on the chimney-piece, measuring perhaps the last hour of the victim.

Long minutes passed in this way; then a furtive step glided through the corridor, a pale shadow appeared in the doorway, and approached the inert body.

It was Annie Raven.

Her bony hand felt Miss Morgan's corsage and stopped above the heart.

Whether because its pulsations were too feeble to be felt through the clothing, or for some other reason, the confidential servant of Sir Roger believed that Ellena's heart beat no longer.

A frightful smile contracted her lips.

"Well done, Jack," she muttered.

Then, addressing the insensible and prostrate form, her fury found vent in a storm of imprecations.

"So you expected to enjoy in peace the fortune you had just taken back from me, that fortune I had gained by such efforts and attention. You were young and fair, life

opened before you full of smiles and promises. A marriage with that miserable Frenchman, doubtless, and a good million for your dowry. Ah, ah! you'll have to lower your price, my own!"

Invectives rushed to her parchment-like lips.

"So there she is, that creature whom it was a mistake not to throw into the Thames on a foggy night! Back she comes to ruin me, to mock at all my hopes. I was at home, do you understand? at home! I had swallowed affronts, endured the whims of an old fool, devised my plans, waited patiently for twenty years. I had almost reached the goal, the place was gained. And then you come to thwart all that, to break, like a stupid wasp, the web I had been spinning all my life!"

As she was uttering these words, Annie noticed the bandage which surrounded the neck of her victim and prevented the blood from flowing.

"Oh!" said she with a ghoulish laugh, "none of that! I don't want you to get over it!"

She tore off the dressing, threw the handkerchief aside, and looked at the thread of

blood which began to spurt again on Ellena's dress.

"You will not have enjoyed your triumph long," she muttered. "Where will your big blue eyes be to-morrow, your rosy lips, your dreams of joy, your plans, your riches. Ah! I have suffered much within an hour, but I am avenged. A prison for me, perhaps, but for you, the grave!"

Hasty steps waked the echoes in the corridor. It was Albert coming back with the doctor, Bistouri, and two policemen. When he saw Annie standing near Ellena's body the young man shuddered with terror.

"Seize that woman!" he exclaimed.

Perfectly self-possessed, the housekeeper contented herself with shrugging her shoulders, and placed herself between the policemen.

"Do what you like with me," said she. "I have played my cards, I have lost, and I defy you all."

Bistouri's eyes roved from Albert to the dying girl. "Ah!" he muttered in consternation, "it is my fault! Mme. Dorian predicted it; why did I not follow her advice?"

Dr. Williams unfolded his case of instru-

ments, probed the wound and proceeded to extract the ball. With mortal anxiety the young artist studied his face.

"Doctor, you have arrived just in time to certify to her decease," hissed the harsh voice of Annie Raven.

"Wretch! did you kill her?" thundered Albert.

"Be quiet!" said the doctor imperatively, raising his head.

Albert had just observed his bloody handkerchief lying on the carpet.

"I bandaged her wound myself to stop the hemorrhage before I left her," he exclaimed; "who has taken off that dressing?"

A profound silence followed, interrupted anew by the ferocious laugh of Annie Raven.

"Look at her hands, they are red," said Bistouri, pointing to the prisoner.

"Was it you?" asked the artist, his eyes blazing and his fists clenched.

She kept silence.

"You will pay for this," said the inspector in a hoarse voice.

"I do not care," replied the wretched woman, to whom "the Frenchman's" grief was a delightful spectacle.

"You did that, you wretch! You meant to make an end of her!" stammered the latter.

"She robbed me of a fortune; I took my revenge."

In her intense satisfaction at having spread wretchedness all around her before sinking into the abyss, Annie seemed to have forgotten the horrors of her own situation.

While preparing another dressing, Dr. Williams had not lost a word of this dialogue. When his operation was over, he rose slowly and turned to the prisoner.

"Was it you who removed the handkerchief from the wound?" said he.

"Yes," replied Annie Raven defiantly, "it was I!"

"You did well," declared the doctor, "I thank you for it."

The housekeeper drew back, confounded.

"How!" she muttered. "What do you mean?"

"You saved the life of the wounded girl, for if she had bled inwardly she would have died of suffocation. As it is, thanks to you, I can answer for her recovery."

Annie's cry of rage mingled with a joyful

exclamation from Albert, who threw himself into Bistouri's arms.

"Remain near the invalid," said Dr. Williams to the artist, "she will soon recover her senses. Then call me. I am going to attend to Sir Roger."

"Take that woman away," said the inspector to his assistants.

Thunderstruck by what she had just heard, the housekeeper did not regain her energy until she felt the heavy hands of the policemen upon her wrists. As she was leaving this house, where she had queened it so long, to enter the cell of the condemned, it seemed to her that the earth yawned beneath her feet.

"Jack! help me!" she cried, "they are killing me!"

"It is useless to make a racket," said Bistouri coolly, "he will not come. Jack is *buckled up*."

* * * * *

In July there was a double wedding: that of Bistouri to Mary Grey, the fair-haired domestic, and that of Albert to Ellena.

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